THE TWO HOUSES OF ISRAEL

ARCHAEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

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State Formation and the
Origins of Pan-Israelite Identity

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Atlanta

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Cover photograph of the stepped stone structure by Zev Radovan, BibleLandPictures.com.

To Adar, my partner

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Preface

The research for the study presented in this book began more than fifteen years ago with my PhD dissertation (titled "The Formation of Judah in the Ninth Century BCE: Archaeological, Historical and Historiographical Perspectives"), which was written under the supervision of Professor Oded Lipschits and submitted to Tel Aviv University (2007–2013). The dissertation focused on the archaeology and history of Judah in the ninth century BCE, and thus from a biblical perspective it relied mainly on the study of the book of Kings. The early beginnings of Judah in the tenth century BCE and how this period was portrayed in the stories about Saul and David in the book of Samuel were left out of my dissertation. For this reason, the dissertation was never published as a book, despite the ongoing encouragement by my Doktorvater, Professor Lipschits. Although it provided new insights into the archaeology and history of Judah during the ninth century BCE, which were consequently published in many articles, I felt that it did not provide a complete, wide-scale, and detailed study of the overall emergence and formation of the Israelite monarchies. During the ten years that have elapsed since the submission of my PhD dissertation, I managed to bring the overall study of this subject to what may be considered completion, at least in the sense that it is now worthy of being published as a monograph.

During these past ten years, I have dedicated much time to substantiating the original research with a relevant and up-to-date theoretical framework related to the nature and social structure of ancient Near Eastern polities. In addition, the scope of the original research was extended both in time (beginning in the Late Bronze Age/Iron I transition) and in space (considering the archaeology and history of the entire southern Levant). The study of the early beginnings of Israel and Judah likewise required revisiting the much-debated material embedded in the book of Samuel. All these different studies were published in various articles over the past ten years. However, no attempt was made to col-

late them into one compelling archaeological-historical narrative. It was thanks to two scholars—Professor Rainer Albertz, a renowned biblical scholar from Germany, and Dr. Assaf Kleiman, a young and promising Israeli scholar—that I eventually set out to do so. They both encouraged me to collect the different threads of my research, to form a comprehensive study of state formation in Israel and Judah and the origins of Pan-Israelite identity. Such encouragement from two ends of contemporary scholarship provided me with the drive to complete the unfinished study that began with my PhD dissertation and to present it in the following book. I am, therefore, indebted to both. In this regard, I should also mention the Covid-19 pandemic that governed our life during the past two years. The cessation of travel and fieldwork during the first year of the pandemic (2020–2021) provided the necessary time (and patience) to complete much of the writing.

None of this would have been possible without the support and beneficial advice of friends, colleagues, and family, to whom I wish to extend my gratitude. First and foremost, to my dear teachers, friends, and colleagues from the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures in Tel Aviv University—Professor Lipschits, Professor Yuval Gadot, and Dr. Ido Koch. Each of them taught me much about the archaeology and history of Israel, how to calculate my steps in the scholarly world, and how to engage with fine scholarship. I am lucky to consider such remarkable scholars not only as my colleagues but also as my friends: Professor Lipschits was (and still is) my mentor, who took the German term for PhD supervisor—Doktorvater—literally, treating his students (myself included) as his own family. His scholarship and multifaceted research activities, together with his constant and unconditional support, are a source of inspiration to me. Professor Gadot taught me the real essence of archaeology, its multivocality, and above all, its human nature, whether in fieldwork or in the library. He also taught me the importance of patience in archaeological research and much beyond. Professor Gadot has read large portions of the manuscript for this book and made valuable comments. Dr. Koch and I maintain a long-term friendship that goes well beyond our shared time at Tel Aviv University, first as students and later as colleagues. I would like to thank him for being a true and supportive friend, in good as well as in harder times, and for countless hours of discussing and debating various topics presented in this book. Dr. Koch has also read large portions of the manuscript and made helpful comments.

I am also indebted to many other friends and colleagues from the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures at Tel Aviv University who supported my research with good advice and learned discussions: Professor Israel Finkelstein, Professor Erez Ben-Yosef, Professor Ran Barkai, Professor Yoram Cohen, Professor Alexander Fantalkin, Dr. Dafna Langgut, Dr. Lidar Sapir-Hen, Ms. Helena Roth, Ms. Shua Kisilevitz, Ms. Nirit Kedem, Ms. Tzippi Kupper-Blau, and Ms. Dana Ackerfeld. I would like to single out Professor Nadav Naʾaman and Dr. Assaf Kleiman: Professor Naʾaman was an important source of inspiration throughout my research. I was lucky enough to participate in his well-remembered seminars at Tel Aviv University, where we, the students, could become acquainted with his encyclopedic knowledge and sharp analytical skills. Prof. Naʾaman discussed with me many of the topics that are also in this book, and I would like to thank him for his good advice and his harsh criticism, as both challenged me to better my work. Dr. Kleiman not only encouraged me to write this book but also spent countless hours discussing many of its aspects with me.

My deepest gratitude is likewise extended to colleagues from other institutions in Israel and Europe, who shared with me their knowledge and discussed the issues presented in this book: Professor Aren Maeir, Professor Amihai Mazar, Professor Gunnar Lehmann, Professor Ronny Reich, Professor Erhard Blum, Professor Thomas Römer, Professor Bernd Schipper, Professor Christian Frevel, Professor Jakob Wöhrle, Professor Joachim Krause, Professor Kristin Weingart, Dr. Sabine Kleiman, Dr. Nava Panitz-Cohen, and Efrat Bocher. I would like to single out Professor Hannes Bezzel, from Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena (Germany), my partner in the archaeological and historical research of the Jezreel Valley, who read large portions of the manuscript and made valuable comments. Dr. Karen Covello-Paran, from the Israeli Antiquities Authority, my partner for the archaeological research of the Jezreel Valley, is also a dear friend from whom I learned and continue to learn how to conduct fine archaeological research—from the field to the final publication. Special thanks extended to Professor Ronny Reich and to Efrat Bocher for assistance in finding the picture for the back cover of this book.

Much of the research for the study presented in this book was conducted during long research stays in Germany. I would like to thank Professor Manfred Oeming, who hosted me in one of the most beautiful towns in Europe, Heidelberg, where I spent two years (2012–2014) as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Theology Faculty of Karls-Ruprecht

Universität Heidelberg. I would also like to thank Professor Angelika Ber-
lejung, who hosted me periodically for research stays (2016–2020) in the
beautiful city of Leipzig, as a guest scholar in the Theology Faculty of Uni-
versität Leipzig. It is thanks to their constant support and friendship that I
was able to finish the study needed for this book.

Special thanks should also be extended to my students in Tel Aviv
University throughout the past ten years. Their smart questions in many
introductory courses to the Bronze and Iron Age Levant and the stimulat-
ing discussions with them during seminars challenged me to articulate
my views on the matters at hand. I would like to specifically thank Jordan
Weitzel, Madeleine Butcher, Omer Peleg, and Maayan Hemed, who assist
me in field and office work. Special thanks to Sean Dugow, who edited
the English text of the manuscript, doing wonders with my poor Eng-
lish skills, and to Itamar Ben-Ezra, who prepared the beautiful maps for
this book. I am also indebted to Professor Brian Schmidt, the editor of
Archaeology and Biblical Studies, the series that facilitates the publication
of this book. Brian's comments and editorial notes on earlier versions of
the manuscript were insightful and helped me improve it.

A colleague at Tel Aviv University once told me, "No need to apolo-
gize; we are all obsessive to our research." This is indeed true. Nonetheless,
obsessiveness comes with a price, and mostly it is our families that have
to pay. I would therefore like to thank my family: my dear mother, Retta
Sergi; my brothers, Idan and Daniel Sergi, and their families; and my
beloved partner, Adar Mann, for years of support and understanding with
love and much patience, without which I would never be able to do what I
do. Above all, it is my partner, Adar, to whom I owe the deepest gratitude.
It is never easy to endure me, especially through the long years of devel-
oping an academic career or in the time needed to accomplish this study.
His love and friendship provided me with rock-solid support and gave me
the drive to keep going and pursue my dreams. It is thanks to him—more
than anyone else—that I eventually managed to do so, and therefore I am
dedicating this book to him.

Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AB	Anchor Bible
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
ABSA	*Annual of the British School at Athens*
ABW	Archaeology of the Biblical World
AcOr	*Acta Orientalia*
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AeL	*Ägypten und Levante*
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AM	Archaeological Monographs
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AncJP	Ancient Jerusalem Publications
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
AO	*Antiguo Oriente*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	*Altorientalische Forschungen*
AR	Archeological Reports
ARA	*Annual Review of Anthropology*
ARC	*Archaeological Review from Cambridge*
ASI	Archaeological Survey of Israel
ASORAR	ASOR Archaeological Reports
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch

ATDan	Acta Theologica Danica
Atiqot	*ʿAtiqot*
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
AWE	*Ancient West and East*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BARIS	BAR (British Archaeological Reports) International Series
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements
BCAW	Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World
BEAM	Beiträge zur Erforschung der antiken Moabitis (Ard el-Kerak)
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BibEnc	Biblical Encyclopedia
BICSUL	*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London*
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BMes	Bibliotheca Mesopotamia
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BWANT	Beitr.ge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CC	Continental Commentaries
CCEM	Contributions to the Chronology of Eastern Mediterranean
ch(s).	chapter(s)
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CIS	Copenhagen International Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
COS	Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. *The Context of Scripture*. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2016.
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
Dtr	Deuteronomistic
DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
EA	El-Amarna tablets. According to the edition of Jürgen A. Knudtzon. *Die el-Amarna-Tafeln*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–

1915. Repr., Aalen: Zeller, 1964. Continued in Anson F. Rainey, *El-Amarna Tablets, 359–379.* 2nd rev. ed. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1978

EAE	Encounters with Ancient Egypt
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
EL	*Egypt and the Levant*
EntRel	*Entangled Religions*
ErIsr	*Eretz-Israel*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FWCJS	*Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies*
Geoarch	*Geoarchaeology: An International Journal*
ha	hectare(s)
HACL	History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant
HB	Hebrew Bible
HBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
Heb.	Hebrew
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IAAR	IAA Reports
IAAS	IAA Studies
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
Int	*Interpretation*
JAA	*Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*
JAEI	*Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections*
JAJ	*Journal of Ancient Judaism*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JAR	*Journal of Anthropological Research*
JArchR	*Journal of Archaeological Research*
JArchS	*Journal of Archaeological Science*
JASR	*Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*

JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JDDS	Jian Dao Dissertation Series
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JFA	*Journal of Field Archaeology*
JHebS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JHNES	Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies
JJA	*Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology*
JMA	*Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JWP	*Journal of World Prehistory*
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
km	kilometer(s)
LAS	Leipziger Altorientalische Studien
LB	Late Bronze
LevSup	Levant Supplementary Series
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
m	meter(s)
mm	millimeter(s)
MAA	*Mediterranean Archaeology & Archaeometry*
MB	Middle Bronze
MM	Museum Monographs
MMA	Monographs in Mediterranean Archaeology
MS	Monograph Series
MT	Materiale Textkulturen
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. Edited by Ephraim Stern. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society
NSJ	*New Studies on Jerusalem*
ÖBS	Österreichische biblische Studien
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica
OEA	Oriental and European Archaeology
OIC	Oriental Institute Communications

OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OJA	*Oxford Journal of Archaeology*
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OP	Occasional Publications
OPA	*The Old Potter's Almanack*
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in Der Antike
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PÄ	Probleme der Ägyptologie
PAPS	*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*
PBA	Proceedings of the British Academy
PEFA	Palestine Exploration Fund Annual
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PNAS	*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*
PSWC	*Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies Held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 13–19 August 1973*
r.	reigned
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
Radioc	*Radiocarbon*
RB	*Revue biblique*
ResEA	*Research in Economic Anthropology*
RIHAO	*Revista del Instituto de Historia Antigua Oriental*
SAAB	*State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
SAHL	Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant
SAM	Sheffield Archaeological Monographs
SBLStBL	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
ScrHier	Scripta Hierosolymitana
SemCl	*Semitica et Classica*
Sem	*Semitica*
SJ	Studia Judaica
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SL	The Schweich Lecture
SMEA	Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici
SMA	Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology
SOC	Studies in Oriental Civilizations

SSEAP	SSEA Publication
SSRW	Samaria-Sebaste Reports of the Work of the Joint Expedition in 1931–1933 and of the British Expedition in 1935
Strata	*Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society*
STT	Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian toimituksia
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TAVO	Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients
TF	Theorie und Forschung
ThSt	Theologische Studien
TQ	*Theologische Quartalschrift*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
v(v).	verse(s)
VerbEccl	*Verbum et Ecclesia*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WA	*World Archaeology*
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WAWSup	Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
WSA	Wahrnehmungen und Spuren Altägyptens
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZABR	*Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtgeschichte*
ZÄS	*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*
ZAVA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

1

The Early Israelite Monarchy:
People, State, and Unity

The narratives of Saul and David are among the most popular stories in the Hebrew Bible. They embody some of the most iconic scenes within the biblical accounts, many of which have become staples of Western art. Over the course of the past two millennia, Saul and David have been embraced as heroic figures throughout the West by kings and outlaws, spiritual leaders and theologians. The vivid stories of their lives have served as a source of inspiration for artists, and likewise as a foil for philosophical explorations of morality and politics, kings and states, divine rule and earthly rule. Indeed, the saga of the first kings of Israel is unparalleled elsewhere within the Hebrew Bible in terms of both scope and dramatic narrative. As a timeless story of heroism, devotion, loyalty, and betrayal, it features the only plot entirely driven by human states of mind and the human emotions of love, jealousy, and hate. The numerous characters and side narratives, each with their own plot, frame the main themes: the young shepherd's ascent to power against all odds, the conspiracies within his conflicted court, the rise and fall of heroes and great kings, and ultimately the fragility of the human condition. As a result, the stories of Saul and David have earned a unique place in both Jewish and Christian cultural memory.

It is therefore unsurprising that, for the greater part of the last two centuries, the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon held an axial position in the historical study of ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible. The biblical literature was uncritically accepted as a reliable source for the events and circumstances that prevailed during the tenth century BCE. Consequently, the united monarchy was taken for granted as a historical fact and thus became the prism through which all ancient Israelite history was interpreted. The biblical texts were dated according to their own internal chronology, which was likewise applied to any associated archeological

finds. Despite its once-firm establishment across multiple disciplines ranging from archaeology and ancient Near Eastern history to theology, confidence in the historicity of the united monarchy rapidly collapsed over the course of the last decade of the twentieth century. With this collapse came the disappearance from the scholarly literature of a multitude of previously vaunted hypotheses and historical reconstructions. The united monarchy of David had been demoted from historical fact to a literary and ideological construct. Given the former centrality it held in most historical reconstructions, its rapid evaporation naturally gave rise to new problems, some of which are of particular significance for the understanding of the history and literature of ancient Israel. These have to do with the very idea of a union between Israel and Judah, either social or political, its expression in the biblical literature, and its potential expression in the material remains. It is these problems that the present book means to explore.

It is important to stress, however, that this is not a book about the united monarchy. While the united monarchy will be extensively discussed within this first introductory chapter, I will not elaborate further on its historicity or on the long debate over the issue. Rather, the focus of this book is on state formation and the evolution of social identity in the political landscape of the early Iron Age Levant. It seeks to explore the social developments that underlie the formation of Israel and Judah and the ways in which these developments were manifested in order to normalize and legitimize the new structures of power. It also aims to shed new light on Israelite identities and how they were related to the very nature of the Israelite political entities. This is, therefore, a book about early monarchic Israel and Judah in their social and geopolitical context—that of the early Iron Age Levant, which saw the emergence of new peoples and new kingdoms at a very specific moment of its history. This is a book about that particular moment in place and time, and how it shaped the early history of Israel and Judah.

1.1. The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the United Monarchy

The kingdoms of Israel and Judah are known, first and foremost, from the Hebrew Bible. The story of these kingdoms is narrated in the books of Samuel and Kings, which, in their current position within the Hebrew Bible, present the advent of the Israelite monarchy as the culmination of a relatively coherent process that began with the ancestral family described in Genesis. According to this narrative, the Israelite monarchy reached

its zenith in its early days, when it was a great united monarchy encompassing the territories of both Israel and Judah, and ruled by David and Solomon from Jerusalem.

The story of the united monarchy is told in the book of Samuel and in the first twelve chapters of Kings, where the political lives of its three kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—are vividly recounted, providing the framework through which the rise and fall of the united monarchy is portrayed. In broad strokes, the story can be divided into two parts: the first (1 Sam 1–2 Sam 5) describes the formation of the Davidic monarchy—it narrates the story of Saul, the first king of the Israelites, who failed in establishing a long-lasting dynastic monarchy. Consequently, it narrates the story of David, who rose to power in Saul's court, ascended to the throne after Saul's death, and united Israel and Judah under his rule. The second part (1 Sam 9–1 Kgs 12) tells of the united monarchy and its ultimate division—describing the intrigues and conspiracies in David's court and the tensions between Israel and Judah (2 Sam 15–20), which ultimately bring about the schism of the united monarchy after the death of David's son and heir, Solomon (2 Kgs 11–12). This transpires despite the peace and prosperity that define Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 3–10). Only David figures as a main protagonist in both parts; however, his characterization in each differs considerably. David in the second part retains hardly a trace of the boldness, wit, and charisma of the talented warrior described in the first, becoming instead an old, hesitant, and lazy king.

It was only in the 1980s and 1990s that doubts began to surface about the historicity of a great united monarchy ruled by David and Solomon from Jerusalem. Scholars initially noted the discrepancy between the vivid depiction of the united monarchy in Samuel and Kings and the fact that no evidence of it could be found in the material remains or in extrabiblical sources (e.g., Garbini 1988). The lack of evidence for the existence of a great united monarchy (e.g., Finkelstein 2010), and that Judah seemed to be almost completely absent from extrabiblical sources prior to the late eighth century BCE (but see below), prompted scholars to dismiss the biblical narrative in a call for a reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel independent of the Hebrew Bible. According to this approach, Judah may not be considered a full-blown territorial kingdom before the Iron IIB, concurrent with the fall of Israel in 734–720 BCE (e.g., Jamieson-Drake 1991; Finkelstein 1999a). Some of these scholars went so far as to argue that Saul, David, and Solomon were fictional characters in a legendary narrative composed no earlier than

the Hellenistic period.[1] Nevertheless, the discovery of the Tel Dan Stela (Biran and Naveh 1993, 1995) pulled the rug out from under these latter views, as the words "Beit-David" (house of David) are clearly inscribed on its smooth black surface. There is little doubt that the term "house of David" on the Tel Dan Stela refers to mid-ninth-century BCE Judah, indicating that someone named David was conceived of as the founder of the Judahite monarchy, at least by outsiders.[2] In addition, the accumulating archaeological data from the southern Levant made it clear that statehood in Judah (namely, the emergence of urbanism, hierarchical settlement pattern, and some level of centralization) existed much before the late eighth century BCE.[3] Although none of this evidence proves the historicity of the united monarchy, it does suggest that Judah and the house of David rose to power long before the eighth century BCE. Therefore, the stories about their early formation should likewise not be dismissed out of hand.

Ultimately, it was the ongoing archaeological research in the southern Levant that dealt the final blow to the united monarchy as a historical entity. It became clear that the northern Samaria Hills had been significantly more densely populated relative to the regions of Judah and Jerusalem. The former exhibited a rapid accumulation of wealth, which enabled the development of complex social structure and political centralization before any similar phenomena could be attested in the south.[4] The relatively poor remains from early Iron Age Jerusalem stood in marked contrast not only to the depiction of Solomon's lavish and rich capital (1 Kgs 4; 5:1–25; 9:26–28; 10:18–29) but also to the degree of urbanization and monumentality in contemporaneous northern sites, such as Tel Reḥov, and even more so in contrast to sites in the lowlands west of Judah, such as Tel Miqne/Ekron and Tell eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath. All these factors pointed to the relatively marginal local importance of Jerusalem and cast doubt on the possibility that it could have functioned as a capital ruling a considerable swath of territory, whether extending to the north or to the west. However, if I had to pinpoint the watershed moment of the collapse of the

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1. E.g., Thompson 1992; Davies 1995; Whitelam 1996.

2. Albertz 2010; Weippert 2010, 266–69; Pioske 2015, 177–88.

3. Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004; Na'aman 2013a; Sergi 2013; Lehmann and Niemann 2014. Chapters 4–5 of this book provide a detailed discussion of this subject.

4. Finkelstein 1995a, 1999a, 2003a.

united monarchy episteme, it would be the publication of Israel Finkelstein's "low chronology."

Finkelstein (1996a, 1998) observed that the entire chronology of the early Iron Age southern Levant had been based on a questionable interpretation of the biblical text rather than on solid archaeological grounds. His initial suggestion to lower the absolute dating of the Iron I/IIA transition to the late tenth/early ninth centuries BCE turned out to be somewhat of an overcorrection (as he himself later admitted),[5] but there is little doubt today—even among his most devoted critics—that the monumental building activity in the northern valleys (e.g., Tel Megiddo VA–IVB), which was previously attributed to Solomon (Yadin 1958), should instead be dated to the early ninth century BCE and therefore be attributed to the Omride kings of Israel (Finkelstein 2000). Consequently, the existence of the united monarchy was left without archaeological support and largely disappeared from the discourse. Since the turn of the century, investigations have focused on understanding Israel and Judah as two distinct polities, each with its own origin. Among mainstream scholars, this shift in the status of the united monarchy—from historical to fictional entity— was relatively rapid. Even scholars who may be seen as more conservative in their assessments of David's kingdom (e.g., Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel 2012) do not maintain that it extended all the way to the northern valleys or that it encompassed any of the territories of the kingdom of Israel.

The only challenge to the new paradigm came from scholars who dismissed the archaeological evidence as irrelevant. According to their line of thought, which relied on a particular reading of studies on the kin-based nature of ancient Near Eastern societies, the united monarchy would have been based on personal political bonds between its kings (David and Solomon) and the other clans of Israel, who resided in the central highlands of Canaan and beyond. Accordingly, so it is argued, no material remains should be expected to represent the social nature of the united monarchy (Master 2001; Stager 2003). A more recent critique, in a similar vein, makes the case that prosperous nomadic societies could form a monarchic structure even in the absence of architectural remains (Ben-Yosef 2019).

Some of these observations are indeed important. The social nature of early Iron Age societies should be considered in any historical reconstruction

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5. Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2006a, 2006b, 2011; see details and further literature in §1.5 below.

of early monarchic Israel. I will deal with this subject more thoroughly in the next chapter. However, these arguments that dismiss the archaeological evidence as irrelevant ultimately leave the united monarchy—once again—as a literary (rather than historical) entity. The important point to be made in this context—as will be further shown throughout this book—is that even in a tribal society, where sociopolitical hierarchies are based on personal alliances (rather than bureaucratic apparatus), the formation of a more centralized power structure is still expressed in the material remains: personal bonds and tribal alliances were economically materialized and thus may be traced in the archaeological record, particularly in the form of exchange or accumulation of wealth. Furthermore, evidence from the southern Levant suggests that local nomadic groups, when they prospered, did express their social hierarchy in stone-built structures, some of which are of a public nature. Both a monumental gate (though small in scale) and a small fort have been discovered at copper production sites in the arid Arabah Valley (at Timnaʿ and Khirbet en-Naḥas, respectively), which were associated with the desert's tribal and nomadic groups.[6] The many Iron IIA settlements in the Negev Highlands were likewise built of stone, in spite of their association with pastoral-mobile groups (Martin and Finkelstein 2013). More significant for the current discussion, beginning in the early Iron IIA, there is clear evidence for public and monumental building activity in Jerusalem,[7] and even earlier, monumental structures were built in Iron I Shiloh. Both Shiloh and Jerusalem were highland strongholds among a relatively tribal and even (to some extent) mobile society (e.g., Finkelstein 1993a), and both still exhibit monumental and public architecture, which in turn could imply the existence of some centralized form of tribal alliance. Hence, any argument regarding architectural bias must consider that in the central Canaanite Highlands, the formation of a new and increasingly hierarchical social structure was manifested in monumental building activity.

Even if we accept that David could have ruled the entire central Canaanite Highlands (a hypothesis that the material remains, as will be discussed in chs. 4–5, could hardly support)—that would still have been quite modest in contrast to the great united monarchy portrayed in Samuel

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6. For the gate in Timnaʿ, see Ben-Yosef, Langgut, and Sapir-Hen 2017. For the fort at Khirbet en-Naḥas, see Levy et al. 2004. For criticism, see Finkelstein 2005a and further discussion in 5.2 below.

7. Sergi 2017a; Gadot and Uziel 2017; A. Mazar 2020a; and further discussion at §4.1 and §5.3, below.

and Kings. There is absolutely no evidence for the flow of wealth to Jerusalem as depicted in 1 Kgs 3–11 or any to support the possibility that the Iron IIA Jerusalemite elite could have ruled over the strong urban centers in the lowlands west of Judah, much less those farther away in the northern valleys. This stands in addition to the fact that all the available historical sources (admittedly, meager) point to the primacy of the kingdom of Israel as a local power with regional influence, making implausible the notion that Israel was once ruled from the relatively marginal Judah. It was in light of these observations that many archaeologists drew the conclusion that the united monarchy must be considered a literary construct with no historical grounds. Biblical scholars soon followed suit, reevaluating the stories of Saul, David, and Solomon and arriving at a similar conclusion.

1.2. The Books of Samuel and Kings and the United Monarchy

The shift in the historical and archaeological research on early monarchic Israel went hand in hand with major shifts in the biblical studies field: long-standing paradigms regarding the formation of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets were dismissed in the face of new and bold models. In a nutshell, the classic statement of the Documentary Hypothesis, which governed the study of the Pentateuch from the late nineteenth century, has been almost completely abandoned over the course of the past five decades. With it, gone are the old assumptions about relatively consistent narrative works, encompassing the entire mythic history in Genesis–Deuteronomy, many of which were dated to the monarchic period, in some cases even to the reign of Solomon.[8] Instead, many scholars now agree that the narrative blocks of the Pentateuch (i.e., the ancestors' stories and the exodus) were composed at different times in different places and were not compiled and redacted into the relatively coherent story in Genesis–Deuteronomy before the Persian period. Furthermore, there appears to be great agreement among scholars that the formation of the entire narrative recounting the history of ancient Israel in Genesis–2 Kings was the end result of an extensive redaction process that took place over a long span of time.[9] This major shift in what once was the predominant paradigm within the field of biblical studies has also affected the way in which the united monarchy

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8. For the history of this research, see Römer 2006.
9. See, for instance, various articles in Dozeman, Schmid, and Römer 2011; Gertz et al. 2016.

is perceived: what was thought to be a pan-Israelite literary tradition origi-
nating in the united monarchy (in the allegedly enlightened period in the
days of Solomon) is now thought to be a collection of different traditions,
originating in both Israel and Judah, that were redacted together through
the lens of a pan-Israelite perspective only in the Persian period, a time
when neither Israel nor Judah continued to exist. In other words, a sense
of common Israelite identity, which was traditionally seen as the founda-
tional social bond behind the united monarchy, was now conceived of as
an innovation of the postmonarchic period.

Naturally, this new understanding of the compositional history of the
Pentateuch prompted a reappraisal of the reigning hypothesis regarding
the composition of the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and
Kings), narrating a history of Israel from the conquest of the land until
the exile. This shift will be discussed at length in chapter 6, but for now it
will suffice to say that the early date traditionally assigned to many of the
stories about the united monarchy in 1 Sam 1–1 Kgs 12 was called into
question as biblical scholars began to recognize the temporal gap between
the composition and redaction of these narratives and the early reality
they sought to depict. Thus, literary works that had been considered to be
contemporaneous to David and Solomon and to be reliable witnesses to
historical events were now dated to a much later period, for the most part
not before the late eighth century BCE.[10] As a result, the shift in archeo-
logical understanding was paralleled in other fields, as biblical scholars
began to see the united monarchy not as a historical entity but rather as a
theological or literary idea.

Before moving on, a more general comment regarding the historicity
of the Hebrew Bible should be made, particularly regarding the so-called
historiographic narrative in Joshua–Kings. It is commonly agreed that
the books of Samuel and Kings were first composed and redacted, based
on older textual sources, not earlier than the late seventh or early sixth
century BCE. Yet, the following should be noted: (1) the campaign of
Sheshonq I (henceforth Shishak) to Canaan (during the second half of
the tenth century BCE) is the earliest event documented in the Hebrew
Bible (1 Kgs 14:25–28) supported by an extrabiblical source (Shishak's
Karnak Relief);[11] (2) beginning with Shishak's campaign to Canaan,

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10. E.g., Kratz 2005, 170–86; Dietrich 2007, 262–316. For further discussion, see ch. 6.

11. Shishak's campaign to Canaan and the reference to it in Kings are discussed §4.2.1.

many of the events preserved in Kings are also documented in extrabiblical sources; and (3) almost all the Israelite kings beginning with Omri (r. ca. 887–875 BCE), and all the Judahite kings beginning with Ahaz (r. ca. 732–715/734–727 BCE), are mentioned in extrabiblical sources in the same chronological order as they are listed in Kings. Therefore, it is evident that, from the second half of the tenth/early ninth century BCE, the narrative in Kings enters a more historical realm, at least to the extent that we find corroborating evidence in extrabiblical sources for many of the political events it mentions. Consequently, it is reasonable to argue that whenever it was composed or redacted, the book of Kings was based on some authentic historical sources, including the kings lists of both Israel and Judah, from which later scribes were informed about past events (Van Seters 1983, 297–98; Na'aman 2006a). The contrasting lack of corroborating evidence for earlier events casts significant doubt on the historicity of the biblical narrative prior to Omride rule in Israel. This includes the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon over the united monarchy.

In this context, it is noteworthy that most of the historical data in Kings, which is supported by extrabiblical sources, is provided in short, factual, and chronistic styled accounts (mostly within regnal formulas) that cover the entire history of Israel and Judah for almost 350 years. Such factual notes, accounts, or kings lists are well known from the ancient Near Eastern historiographic tradition. Beyond their historical value, they attest to a systematic recording of historical events within what could broadly be seen as a royal chancellery, which emerged in both Israel and Judah not earlier than the ninth century BCE (Sergi 2014a).[12] In a marked contrast, the roughly one hundred years of the united monarchy are narrated as a complex literary work that includes a variety of characters and dialogues, with numerous diverging side narratives, using mental and emotional conditions as a vehicle for moving the plot forward. Such epic literary works, which are likewise known in the literary tradition of the ancient Near East,[13] were composed by well-trained and highly skilled scribes, who must have had some earlier literary sources at their disposal and thus could hardly be dated to the early monarchic period. These stories are therefore first and foremost literary works that may refer to the past, imagined or real, but were not intended to accurately document it. Rather,

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12. For further discussion, see §5.4.
13. See Milstein 2016.

they illustrate the past as the authors thought it should have been (Blum 2007) in order to reconstruct it as such in the collective cultural memory.[14]

Of course, this does not mean that the stories about Saul and David have no historical value. After all, they still reflect the geopolitical circumstances known to their authors and may even shed light on the way in which historical events were memorized and recounted. As I will demonstrate later in the book, for the most part these stories were not simply legends, heroic and mythic tales about the foundation of the monarchy, but were actually rooted in the sociopolitical setting of the early monarchic period. Thus, even if they only purport to depict historical reality, they should still be considered for their utility in providing potential insights about the historical and ideological origins of the concept of the united Israelite monarchy. Indeed, this is the direction biblical scholarship has taken, engaging with the united monarchy as a theological idea rather than as a historical polity (to be discussed in the next section). The point is that eventually, from neither an archaeological, historical, nor biblical perspective, could the traditional view of the great united monarchy be maintained. The confluence of multiple streams of evidence inevitably undermined the plausibility of a great early Iron Age kingdom encompassing the territories of both Israel and Judah but ruled from Jerusalem. Nevertheless, this recognition led to new problems, as now the imagined unity of Israel and Judah required its own historical context: Where, when, and how could it be conceived?

1.3. The United Monarchy and the Origin of Pan-Israelite Identity: The Israelization-of-Judah Hypothesis

Replacing the reconstruction of a great united monarchy with a more gradual and contemporaneous formation of two neighboring kingdoms fits better with all the available data. For this reason, it was rapidly accepted in the mainstream of scholarly discourse. However, the shift of the united monarchy from the historical past to the intellectual and literary spheres generated new problems, both historical and literary. After all, the story of the united monarchy in 1 Sam 1–1 Kgs 12 is itself not

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14. The term "cultural memory" introduced to the study of the ancient Near East by Assmann (2006, 2011) refers to the active construction of a very certain memory of the past and its performance in different media (written and unwritten) as a means of identity construction.

fictional—it still exists, and scholars agree that much of it (if not all) predates the early composition and redaction of Samuel–Kings. What is the story all about, then? If the united monarchy is not more than a literary fiction, what were the origins of this biblical concept? On which sociohistorical backgrounds could Judahite scribes in Jerusalem envision the rule of the Davidic kings over Israel?

This is not a mere problem of dating the biblical stories about the united monarchy or pondering the reality they yearn to depict. Beyond the political unity of Israel and Judah, the stories of the united monarchy presuppose a common sense of pan-Israelite identity, which provided the social grounds for the political union. In fact, the pan-Israelite identity is stressed throughout the Hebrew Bible: the biblical narrative in Genesis–Kings relates to Israel as a unity until the schism of the united monarchy, as Judah is constantly considered to be part of Israel.[15] Consequently, the questions regarding the intellectual and the literary origins of the united monarchy reflect on a much more fundamental problem—the origins of pan-Israelite ideology and the common sense of Israelite identity.

Martin Noth (1930; 1965, 53–168) forwarded one of the most influential hypotheses in the twentieth century's exegetical research regarding the pan-Israelite identity. In an attempt to historicize the biblical narrative, he argued that the tribes of Israel in the premonarchic period were united by faith around a central cultic place, within some sort of "league of tribes." Noth's thesis offered an institutional grounding for a religiously based collective identity that integrated different tribes into an Israelite entity. For a while Noth's hypothesis gained worldwide recognition, but by the 1970s it could no longer withstand mounting critique.[16] In many aspects, the united monarchy could replace Noth's tribal league as the political origin for pan-Israelite identity, but since it has been discarded as merely a theological conception, a new explanation is needed. In fact, this is not exclusively a historical question regarding when and how the meaning of the name Israel was extended to include also Judah (see Na'aman 2009a, 347–48), but it is a literary one as well. When and how were literary works of Israelite origin (such as the pre-Deuteronomistic book of Judges, the pre-Priestly Jacob story, Hosea, Amos, and the Israelite kings list) adopted

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15. See Kratz 2000, 6–8; Schütte 2012, 62–63; Weingart 2019.

16. Especially in light of the lack of any institutional or cultic unity in premonarchic Israel.

by Judahite/Jerusalemite scribes and further presented as part and parcel of the cultural heritage of Judah itself?

While it is quite clear that the formation of a pan-Israelite ideology was an ongoing process that lasted into the Persian period, with the redaction of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets, its origins are mostly sought in the monarchic period. Since Israel and Judah were never politically united, most scholars suggest the period after the fall of monarchic Israel (720 BCE) but before the fall of Judah (586 BCE) as the mostly likely time frame, during which Israelite written traditions could have been adopted in Judah. The underlying assumption is that Judahite scribes could only have adopted Israel's name and cultural heritage after its destruction, in what is often conceived of as the "Israelization of Judah." In this context scholars can make a clear distinction between historical Israel, the political entity that bore the name and ceased to exist in 720 BCE, and biblical Israel, an entity consisting of both Israelites and Judahites, now seen primarily as a late Judahite/Judean construct, which could not have been conceived of prior to the fall of Israel (e.g., Kratz 2000, 2013). In essence, the Israelization-of-Judah hypothesis turned Noth's original idea on its head: Noth argued that in the beginnings Israel was the name of a people, a social group, in his view a religiously based collectivity, which was only later reshaped as a political identity, a monarchically based collectivity. The Israelization-of-Judah hypothesis suggests precisely the opposite: Israel was first a monarchy, a political identity, which was reconstructed as a designation of a people only after its monarchic institutions ceased to exit.

In the view of many scholars, the Israelization of Judah began with a wave of Israelite refugees who had fled to Judah in the wake of the Assyrian destruction and annexation of their homeland in 734–720 BCE.[17] At first glance, this assumption regarding the flight of Israelite refugees to Judah may seem quite appealing, as it solves both the literary and historical problems. Not only would these Israelite refugees have been the agents who carried Israelite literary works into Judah, but they likewise would have been the reason for the adoption of these works by the Judahite elite. Thus, Israelite refugees in Judah (among them members of the Israelite elite) would have been the catalyst for the Israelization of Judah and the formation of pan-Israelite identity. Appealing as it is, the hypothesis is

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17. E.g., Kratz 2000; 2013, 140–59; 2016, 79–83; Fischer 2004, 280–91; Schniedewind 2004, 68–89; Finkelstein and Silberman 2006; Finkelstein 2011a; Schütte 2012.

nevertheless speculative, lacking any solid historical grounding. Archaeologically, it was initially based on the belief that Jerusalem, and Judah in general, experienced a rapid and unnatural growth in the later decades of the eighth century BCE, the likes of which could only be explained as resulting from massive immigration (Finkelstein 2008, 2015). However, ongoing archaeological research has demonstrated that the population growth in Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, was a more gradual process that transpired over the course of the tenth to the eighth centuries BCE.[18] Furthermore, it is quite implausible that the Assyrians, who had just annexed Israel and subjugated Judah, would have allowed massive immigration from Israel to Judah (Na'aman 2007a, 2014a). Not only is there no known parallel anywhere within the Neo-Assyrian Empire, but such a notion stands in stark contrast to the well-known and well-planned Assyrian resettlement program (Radner 2018). It is therefore unrealistic to imagine that a wave of immigrants, refugees who left their homes and lands behind, would have been accepted with open arms in Judah and allowed to settle in the capital and be further embraced to such an extent as to reshape Judahite cultural identity and traditions in order to encompass those of the newcomers—and all this within a few decades. Indeed, it is appropriate to ask just how many refugees are required to carry a few scrolls from Samaria or Bethel to Jerusalem. There are better ways to explain how Israelite ideology and texts found their way to Judah. After all, Samaria is a mere 45 km north of Jerusalem, and Bethel, the royal Israelite sanctuary of the eighth century BCE, even closer.

The Israelite sanctuary at Bethel, situated just 20 km north of Jerusalem, makes a better candidate as the agent responsible for the arrival of Israelite literature to Judah. While some scholars have suggested this occurred during the postmonarchic period,[19] Nadav Na'aman (2010a) proposes the most plausible scenario from a historical point of view. Since Bethel was annexed by Judah following the Assyrian retreat from the Levant, most probably by Josiah,[20] Na'aman argues that it was likely Josiah who took the Israelite scrolls from Bethel and brought them to Jerusalem (see 2 Kgs 23:16) in order to coopt Israelite cultural heritage for his

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18. E.g., Na'aman 2007a, 2009b; Uziel and Szanton 2015; Gadot and Uziel 2017; Shalev et al. 2019. This subject will be thoroughly discussed in chs. 4–5.

19. E.g., Knauf 2006; Davies 2006, 2007; for persuasive criticism, see Na'aman 2009a, 2010a.

20. Na'aman 1991; 2009a, 338–42; Lipschits 2020, 174–78.

own purposes. This hypothesis provides, to my mind, the most reasonable explanation for the arrival of Israelite scrolls in Jerusalem. This is especially so in light of the Near Eastern cultural precedent Naʾaman (2010a, 6–14) provides for seizing of sacred texts from conquered temples, which occurred in Mesopotamia during the second and the first millennia BCE. This does not explain, however, the alleged Israelization of Judah, specifically why such texts were adopted in Judah from the outset and why they were utilized to reconstruct a sense of common Israelite identity in which Judah was fully merged as part of Israel.

In an attempt to solve this problem, Naʾaman discusses in detail the religious and cultic reforms of Sennacherib, king of Assyria (r. ca. 705–681 BCE): Sennacherib destroyed the city of Babylon and removed its ashes and the statue of Marduk to Assur, the Assyrian cultural-religious capital; he celebrated the Babylonian New Year's festival in Assur; and his scribes reworked the Babylonian epic of creation, replacing the Babylonian god Marduk, who was the creator god and the head of the pantheon, with the Assyrian god Assur. For Naʾaman, the Assyrian efforts to shift the center from Babylon to its own domain might be interpreted as the attempt of an initially marginal and inferior kingdom to take over the heritage of its neighbor. Yet, the Assyrian attempts to inherit the Babylonian cultural heritage cannot be paralleled with the hypothesized Israelization of Judah: the Assyrians did not adopt the Babylonian name or god (as assumed for Judah), but rather they usurped it, replacing Babylon and Marduk with their own city and god, Assur.

In fact, there is no parallel anywhere in the Near East or the classical world for taking over the cultural heritage of a polity by its inferior neighbor in such a way that the latter wished to be completely merged with the heritage of the former, as is assumed for the Israelization of Judah. This alone casts some doubt on the likelihood of the proposition: Should we assume that the royal Judahite scribes in the late monarchic period dismissed their own literary and ideological traditions in the face of new traditions originating from a neighboring, even rival, kingdom? Moreover, should we imagine that the Judahite elite wanted to inherit Israel, immediately after it was brutally destroyed, its territories annexed by a foreign empire, and its elite exiled? This is even more intriguing as the book of Kings, which is generally agreed to date to the late seventh century BCE,[21] strongly condemns Israel on both theological and social grounds

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21. Römer 2005, 97–104; or slightly later, see Kratz 2005, 158–70.

in an attempt to explain and justify its destruction (1 Kgs 12:26–30, 2 Kgs 17:21–23). This in itself stands against any proposal to date the Israelization of Judah to exactly this same period.

The greatest stumbling block for the proposal that Israelite identity was only adopted in Judah after 720 BCE is the presence of occurrences of the name *Israel* as a designation for Judah in prophetic texts, which are almost unanimously dated to the late eighth century BCE (Mic 1–3) and even to the period before the fall of Samaria (Isa 6–8). In Isaiah (8:14), for instance, the two monarchies—Israel and Judah—are called "the two houses of Israel" (Williamson 2011, 91–94; Weingart 2014, 201–12), and it is widely recognized that the god of Judah is already referred to as "the Holy One of Israel" in First Isaiah (Williamson 2001; Weingart 2014, 219–27). Resolving this incongruence by automatically dating such references to the period after the fall of Samaria based solely on an a priori historical assumption (e.g., Kratz 2006) ignores the fact that they are well integrated within their literary context, which points in some cases to a date before the fall of Samaria or only slightly thereafter (Williamson 2011). In this regard, the case of Micah is striking, as its many references to Judah as part of Israel cannot be dated much later than 701 BCE (Williamson 2011, 84–87; Weingart 2014, 227–35, 342–43). Accordingly, we are forced to believe that the conceptualization of Israel and Judah as one entity developed in a brief period of no more than two decades, between the fall of Samaria and Sennacherib's campaign to Judah. It seems, therefore, that in order to explain how it came to be that Israelite identity was adopted in Judah, we must assume that some common sense of Israelite cultural heritage that predated the fall of monarchic Israel was well established in both Israel and Judah.[22]

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the social and political formation of pre- and early monarchic Israel, which has prompted scholars to revisit Noth's hypothesis that Israelite identity originated within a league of tribes.[23] Efforts have been made to identify specific Israelite traditions embedded within the biblical narrative in order to reconstruct Israelite identity during the monarchic period, which would thus shed light on its pre- and early monarchic nature. A unifying feature of these

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22. Frevel (2016, 2021) suggests that the origins of pan-Israelite identity should be sought in the days of the Omride dynasty (ninth century BCE). See further discussion in §5.5 and ch. 6.

23. E.g., Fleming 2012; Weingart 2014; Benz 2016.

studies has been the conclusion that Israelite identity was rooted in the kinship structure typical of ancient Near Eastern societies rather than in any religious or cultic unity, as Noth had hypothesized.

Daniel Fleming (2012) and Kristin Weingart (2014) conducted two of the most influential studies to have applied this approach. Based on an analysis of texts, which he attributes to "Israelite" tradition, Fleming concludes in light of parallel examples from the ancient Near East that Israel was a "de-centralized polity": a tribal alliance that maintained a decentralized political system even under the monarchic rule. He further argues that David was initially a king of Israel and accordingly that Israelite identity could have been conceived in Judah even prior to the fall of Samaria (Fleming 2012, 47–51, 98–109; Leonard-Fleckman 2016). The problem is the lack of sufficient archaeological discussion, especially in relation to Israelite and Judahite state formation in the Iron IIA. Nevertheless, the importance of Fleming's study lies in the attempt to bring back to the fore the question of Israelite identity as a kinship group prior to and during the monarchic period.

Kristin Weingart (2014) carried out a comprehensive diachronic analysis of references to Israel throughout the biblical text, noting the changing meanings and varying utilizations of the name from the monarchic period to the postmonarchic period. Referencing specific texts that she dates to the period before the fall of Samaria, Weingart (2014, 171–286, 340–45) argues that the designation "Israel" maintained its tribal and kinship association and thus was likewise applied to Judah. Counter to the trend of understanding Israel as strictly a reference to a state, Weingart (2014, 346–60) argues that the kinship association of the name Israel had been predominant throughout the monarchic period, which allowed the incorporation of Judah within Israel both in texts originating in Judah (e.g., 2 Sam 15–20, Isa 8:14, Mic 1–3) and in those originating in Israel (e.g., Gen 29–30).

Criticism of Weingart's study centers on the early date she attributes to some of the texts (e.g., Römer 2015a), but there should be little doubt that other texts she discusses can reasonably be attributed to the monarchic period and even prior to the fall of Samaria (Williamson 2011). Moreover, it is important to note that Weingart never actually argues that Judah had borrowed the political designation of its northern neighbor, but rather that Israel had also been a concurrent kinship identity that may have overlapped but was not synonymous with the political one. Her conclusions are open to dispute or modification, but to rule out any understanding of

Israel as a kinship identity would be to ignore the inherent kinship ideology common to all ancient Near Eastern societies.

The name *Israel* was used to identify a kinship group (in Merenptah's Israel Stela) long before it was used as a designation for the Northern Kingdom.[24] That the name *Israel* was first and foremost understood as a kinship identity and not strictly as a political designation is well demonstrated in several texts of the Hebrew Bible. Most significant for the purpose of the current discussion is the Song of Deborah in Judg 5, which is commonly dated to the monarchic (or even early monarchic) period (Groß 2009, 344–49) and attests to Israel as a kinship identity, formed by the alliance of several clans.[25] This by itself lends considerable weight to Weingart's conclusion regarding the kinship nature of Israelite identity, which apparently remained strong even in the monarchic period. Kin-based groups are without distinct geographical boundaries, and this would have been even more so the case in the ancient Levant, where political borders were invisible. Accordingly, any investigation into the nature of Israelite kinship identity should not exclude, a priori, its identification with Judah at some point, even prior to the fall of Israel.

1.4. On This Book

What seems to be an unbridgeable gap between the portrayal of the united monarchy in Samuel–Kings, on the one hand, and the gradual and independent formation of Israel and Judah as two neighboring polities, on the other, constitutes the point of departure for the study presented in this book, which aims to bridge that gap. Accordingly, the present study has two main goals: first, to reconstruct the social and political developments that culminated in the formation of Israel and Judah as two territorial kingdoms, and second, in light of the first, to situate the stories of Saul and David in their accurate social and historical context, in order to illuminate the historical conception of the united monarchy and the pan-Israelite ideology out of which it grew.

Israel and Judah were not unique phenomena within the political landscape of the early Iron Age Levant, which saw the emergence of kin-based territorial polities from southeast Anatolia to the southern

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24. See discussion in ch. 2.
25. J. L. Wright 2011a, 2011b; Fleming 2012, 63–66; Blum 2020.

Levantine desert fringe. The formation of the Iron Age Levantine kingdoms provides the historical context in which Israel and Judah should be understood. It is to this subject that the second chapter of the book is dedicated: it explores the origins of the Iron Age Levantine territorial polities, the social and political landscape in which they emerged, and the newly forged kinship identities associated with them. Particular attention is paid to Aram and Israel.

After I set out the sociohistorical framework in chapter 2, chapters 3–5 are dedicated to an in-depth discussion of state formation in Israel and particularly in Judah. Since only a handful of textual sources potentially shed light on the early Iron Age in the southern Levant, the discussion of state formation in Israel and Judah is based, first and foremost, on archaeological remains: examining settlement patterns and other aspects of material culture that likely reflect socioeconomic networks and thus offer evidence regarding various political configurations over the course of a long span of time. The archaeological discussion, which makes up the lion's share of the book, focuses on the Iron I–IIA but offers glimpses into both the Middle and Late Bronze Ages and the Iron IIB–IIC. Within this frame, the archaeological discussions in chapters 3–5 revisit some of the thorniest problems in the interpretation applied to material remains and present them in their southern Levantine context. Among these are questions regarding the association of material remains with particular social or political identities and questions regarding the interpretation of social complexity and the material expression of political power, as well as questions regarding literacy and a scribal tradition in early monarchic Israel and Judah.

The archaeological discussions in these three chapters are accompanied by a review of the relevant textual sources, which presents its own problems and possibilities. The primary textual source for the histories of early monarchic Israel and Judah is the book of Kings, which, as I have shown above (§1.2), enters the historical realm with its recounting of Shishak's campaign in Canaan. The historical information found in Kings is predominantly contained within regnal formulas applied to Israelite and Judahite kings, which appear to provide some reliable data on local political history. This kind of data is discussed in chapters 3–5 in conjunction with and in light of the preceding archaeological discussions. The aim in assessing these data is to shed further light on the political history of Israel and Judah from the late tenth to the late ninth or early eighth centuries BCE, which cover the latter parts of the period discussed in this book.

In addition to the regnal formulas, Kings contains a few short narrative accounts (1 Kgs 15:17–22; 22:1–38; 2 Kgs 3:4–27; 11:1–20; 14:8–14) relating to the periods discussed in this book. For the most part, these narrative accounts were composed sometime after the events they depict and thus do not necessarily record accurate historical reality. In spite of this, I will examine these accounts within the overall discussion of state formation in Israel and Judah, for they may at the very least reflect on how the early monarchic period was commemorated. In addition to the textual sources embedded in Kings, the meager extrabiblical sources that may shed light on the political and social history of Israel and Judah in their Levantine context will likewise be discussed.

Together, the archaeological and historical discussions in chapters 3–5 present an overall reconstruction of the social and political transformation that culminated in the emergence of early monarchic Israel and Judah. More than anything else, the discussions in these chapters demonstrate that there was hardly any historical link between the formation of Israel and of Judah, each of which eventually took on different courses and resulted in different sociopolitical structures. It is, of course, the formation of Judah and the rise of the house of David (to which the united monarchy is attributed) that stands as the focal point of the discussion. Thus, chapter 3 will assess the social and political structure of the central Canaanite Highlands in the early Iron Age in order to reconstruct the formation of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This in turn will serve as an introduction to the discussion of the Judahite state formation featured in chapters 4–5. In these chapters, I will demonstrate that the formation of Judah was a long and gradual process that lasted throughout most of the tenth and ninth centuries BCE, beginning with the formation of a polity localized in the southern parts of the central Canaanite Highlands (ch. 4). This polity developed into a relatively wealthy territorial polity on the margins of the southern Levant (ch. 5).

Based on the main trajectories and patterns of Judahite state formation identified in the archaeological and textual evidence, I will examine, in chapter 6, the biblical traditions about early monarchic Judah in Samuel. I will do so in an attempt to bridge the gap between the history of early monarchic Judah and the manner in which it is commemorated and reconstructed in Samuel–Kings. The main obstacle in discussing the biblical traditions about Saul, David, and the united monarchy is the lack of agreement among biblical scholars on what may be considered as facts. This situation is very much unlike most of the archaeological treatments

presented in this book, wherein the facts, namely, the finds on the ground, are not disputed, and only their interpretation is debated. In the case of the narratives of Saul and David, biblical scholars can hardly agree on identifying the core narratives, their extent, date, and origin. In order to overcome this obstacle, I will base the discussion here on the archaeological and historical reconstruction presented earlier in this book. I will do so in an attempt to trace the sociopolitical reality presupposed by the authors of the stories about Saul and David. Such an approach will better locate them within time and space. This in turn may not only facilitate the effort to ultimately determine the date and origin of these texts, but it may also illuminate the nature of the kingdoms of Saul and David, and by extension the origin of pan-Israelite identity, at least as far as these phenomena were conceived of by the authors of these texts and perpetuated in Judahite cultural memory.

Before proceeding further, the chronological framework of this book should be briefly addressed.

1.5. A Note Regarding Relative and Absolute Chronologies and the Chronological Framework of This Book

As a rule, archaeological discussions of stratigraphy, settlement patterns, and material culture exclusively use relative chronology (e.g., LB IIA, Iron IIB). The relative chronology is based on the clustering of ceramic assemblages in clear stratigraphic contexts. In other words, relative chronology refers to specific pottery assemblages (which we term Iron I, Iron IIA, etc.). The relative chronology distinguishes earlier from later assemblages and strata and thus facilitates chronologically and spatially oriented assessments even when absolute dates are unknown or in dispute. It is important to understand that the relative chronology represents the sequencing of ceramic assemblages and not historical dates. Our understanding of these ceramic assemblages is based on the clustering of various complete or nearly complete vessels within destruction layers. That means that our relative chronology is based on snapshots in which certain forms and shapes of vessels were frozen in time. The problem with this construct is that changes in conservative craftsmanship such as pottery production were never immediate. Such changes reflect an elongated development over time that is mostly concealed from us due to the nature of archaeological remains. This has two major implications for our dating system: (1) it is impossible to date with precision the transition from one

archaeological period to the other, and for this reason scholars incorporate into their dating systems a relatively long transitional period lasting a few decades; and (2) archaeological remains can be broadly dated, at best, to a resolution of circa one-half century. It is almost impossible to achieve a more precise dating to as fine as a decade. This is true of radiocarbon dating as well, which has indeed improved our ability to provide absolute dates for relative chronology, but still only within a range of roughly half a century.

For these reasons, the translation of pottery assemblages to absolute dates should not be taken for granted. In fact, the establishment of relative and absolute chronologies of ceramic assemblages is one of the most intriguing tasks of archaeology. The period under investigation in this book, the Iron I–IIA, stood at the heart of a fierce and emotionally charged debate that lasted more than fifteen years, during which time it overshadowed every aspect of archaeological research in the southern Levant. Thanks to our ever-increasing knowledge of ceramic assemblages acquired from well-controlled stratigraphic excavations and to the extensive use of radiocarbon dating, the Iron Age chronological debate seems to have finally been quietly resolved. Of course, some disagreements and lacunae remain, but the overall chronological frame of the Iron I–IIA seems to have arrived at a general consensus.[26] Since the early Iron Age chronological debate is particularly relevant to the primary subject of this book, it might nevertheless still be useful to outline the initial disagreements and the trajectories that led to their resolutions.

The Iron I pottery assemblage is associated with the destructions of the so-called Canaanite towns, especially in the northern valleys (e.g., Tel Megiddo Stratum VIA and its contemporaries) but also in southwest Canaan (Tel-Miqne/Ekron Stratum IV). It had been conventionally dated to circa 1000 BCE based on the assumption that King David was responsible for the destructions[27] and despite the fact that the Bible never attributes the destruction of these cities (or any other) to David. Accordingly, the beginning of the Iron IIA was dated to the early tenth century BCE, while

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26. This is mostly true for the southern Levant and even more specifically to the region of modern-day Israel. As for the northern Levant, the relative chronology of the Iron Age sequence was fixed by Mazzoni (2000a, 2000b) and was only recently corroborated with radiocarbon dates from Tell Taʿyinat in the ʿAmuq Valley (Harrison 2021).

27. E.g., Yadin 1970, 95; Dothan 1982, 296; A. Mazar 1992, 371–75.

subsequent urban revitalization in the northern valleys (e.g., Tel Megiddo VA–IVB) was associated with the united monarchy under the reign of Solomon and dated to the mid-tenth century BCE (e.g., Yadin 1958; A. Mazar 1992, 375–97). The Iron IIA destructions in the "Solomonic" towns of the northern valleys were associated with Shishak's campaign in Canaan and dated to circa 925 BCE (A. Mazar 1992, 398–99).[28]

Finkelstein (1996a, 1998) suggested lowering the traditional date of the Iron IIA from the tenth to the ninth century BCE.[29] Accordingly, he dated the Iron I assemblage characterizing the destruction of the "Canaanite" towns (e.g., Tel Megiddo VIA) to the end (instead of the beginning) of the tenth century BCE. He attributed these destructions to Shishak (ca. 925 BCE) rather than to David (ca. 1000 BCE). The Iron IIA assemblage associated with the destruction of the so-called Solomonic towns in the northern valleys was dated to the end of the ninth century (instead of the end of the tenth century BCE). Finkelstein argued that these destructions should be associated with the campaign of Hazael of Aram-Damascus against Israel (2 Kgs 10:32–33; 13:3–4, 7). Finkelstein based the lowering of the absolute dates of the Iron IIA to the ninth century BCE on the fact that the ceramic assemblage associated with the so-called Solomonic towns should now be associated with the palatial compounds identified exclusively with the Omrides of Israel.[30] The proposed ninth-century date of the Solomonic towns was later confirmed by radiometric dating,[31] and thus Finkelstein's low chronology removed from the tenth century BCE many of the finds that had been previously attributed to this period. Consequently, the archaeological evidence for the existence of a great united monarchy essentially disappeared. Nevertheless, by including the ninth century BCE within the Iron IIA, the low chronology brought new life and material content to a period that had been devoid of substantial remains in the traditional chronological system (Finkelstein 2005b, 34–39). This is despite the fact that the ninth century BCE had seen dramatic events

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28. Aharoni and Amiran (1958) include the ninth century BCE in the Iron IIA.
29. Finkelstein's low chronology relates also to the transition from the LB to the Iron I, and the inception of local production of the so-called Philistine pottery. These subjects are beyond the scope of this book, but see the discussion on the end of the LB in §2.1. Further discussion of the Philistines and the Philistine pottery is found in §5.1.1.
30. Zimhoni 1997, 25–26, 28–29; Finkelstein 2000; Franklin 2001, 2005.
31. Toffolo et al. 2014; Finkelstein et al. 2019; Kleiman et al. 2019.

such as the rise and fall of the Omride dynasty in Israel and the rise of Aramaean hegemony in the southern Levant.

The proposal of Finkelstein's low chronology aroused an intense debate regarding the absolute dates of the early Iron Age in the southern Levant. Unfortunately, the initial stormy discussion focused on choosing between only two options (traditional versus low chronology), which hampered any serious effort to reassess the advantages and the problems inherent within each dating system and therefore to suggest a new model.[32] The first breakthrough in this regard arose out of a series of studies conducted by Ze'ev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz (2004, 2006, 2011), who noticed that the Iron IIA assemblages characterize at least two successive occupational layers in the southern Levant. This suggests a long time span for the Iron IIA, so accordingly Herzog and Singer-Avitz subdivided the period into the early Iron IIA (which spans mostly the second half of the tenth century BCE) and the late Iron IIA (which spans the ninth century BCE).[33] In order to do so they observed some nuanced typological distinctions between the assemblages of the early and late Iron IIA. In addition, accumulating the results of radiocarbon dating from controlled well-stratified excavations (primarily in the Jezreel and the Beit Shean Valleys) demonstrated that layers yielding assemblages of the early Iron IIA should be dated within the tenth century BCE (although not particularly early in the century), while those of the late Iron IIA should be dated to the ninth century BCE. Therefore, it is now generally agreed that the Iron IIA began sometime in the first half of the tenth century BCE, which aligns more closely with the modified conventional chronology suggested

32. A. Mazar (1997a) was the clearest voice rejecting Finkelstein's low chronology in favor of the traditional one, and many scholars followed him (e.g., Ben-Tor and Ben-Ami 1998; Bunimovitz and Faust 2001; Dever 2001). A. Mazar (2005) later suggested a modified chronological scheme including the ninth century BCE in the Iron IIA. Mazar's suggestion of a modified chronology represented an important step toward a resolution of the chronological debate. On the other end of this debate, an "ultra-low chronology" was proposed (Gilboa and Sharon 2001, 2003; Gilboa, Sharon, and Zorn 2004; Sharon et al. 2007).

33. In order to date each assemblage, they have chosen two chronological anchors: for the southern sites: Tel Arad XII, associated with a toponym bearing the same name in Shishak's Karnak Relief and thus dated to the second half of the tenth century BCE (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004, 209–19); for the northern valleys, the royal compound at Jezreel, which is solely identified with the Omride dynasty and thus dated to the early ninth century BCE.

by Amihai Mazar (2005). However, it includes the entire ninth century BCE, as originally suggested by Finkelstein's low chronology.[34] Beyond the absolute dating of the early Iron Age, the archaeological discussions in this book require a wider chronological scale in order to investigate changes in settlement patterns and cultural trends over a larger span of time. Table 1.1 provides the relative and absolute chronologies for all archaeological periods discussed in the book.

Table 1.1. Relative and Absolute Chronology of the
Bronze and Iron Ages in the Southern Levant

Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1950–1600/1550 BCE)	MB I	ca. 1950–1800 BCE
	MB II-III	ca. 1800–1600/1550 BCE
Late Bronze Age (1600/1550–1130/1100 BCE)	LB I	ca. 1600/1550–1400 BCE
	LB IIA	ca. 1400–1300 BCE
	LB IIB	ca. 1300–1200/1180 BCE
	LB III	ca. 1200/1180–1130/1100 BCE
Iron Age (1150/1100–550 BCE)	Iron I	ca. 1100–980/950 BCE
	Early Iron IIA	ca. 980/950–900 BCE
	Late Iron IIA	ca. 900–800/780 BCE
	Iron IIB	ca. 800/780–680/650 BCE
	Iron IIC	ca. 680/650–550 BCE

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34. See A. Mazar 2011a; Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2011. See also the quiet agreement regarding the absolute dates of the early and late Iron IIA in the Jezreel and the Beit Shean Valleys in Lee, Bronk-Ramsey, and Mazar 2013; Toffolo et al. 2014.