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## The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts

*By Israel Finkelstein, Neil Asher Silberman*



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Since the 1970s, archaeologists have made great strides in recovering the lost world of the Old Testament. Experts understanding of ancient Israel and its neighbours, and Bible tales, have been changed by these discoveries. This book looks at how the Bible came into existence. The authors assert that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never existed, David and Solomon were merely Chieftans and not kings and the Exodus never happened. They claim, through archaeological evidence, that the Bible was created by the people from the southern nation of Judah, in a last ditch attempt to keep their faith alive.



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### Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

*The Bible Unearthed* is a balanced, thoughtful, bold reconsideration of the historical period that produced the Hebrew Bible. The headline news in this book is easy to pick out: there is no evidence for the existence of Abraham, or any of the Patriarchs; ditto for Moses and the Exodus; and the same goes for the whole period of Judges and the united monarchy of David and Solomon. In fact, the authors argue that it is impossible to say much of anything about ancient Israel until the seventh century B.C., around the time of the reign of King Josiah. In that period, "the narrative of the Bible was uniquely suited to further the religious reform and territorial ambitions of Judah." Yet the authors deny that their arguments should be construed as compromising the Bible's power. Only in the 18th century--"when the Hebrew Bible began to be dissected and studied in isolation from its powerful function in community life"--did readers begin to view the Bible as a source of empirically verifiable history. For most of its life, the Bible has been what Finkelstein and Silberman reveal it once more to be: an eloquent expression of "the deeply rooted sense of shared origins, experiences, and destiny that every human community needs in order to survive," written in such a way as to encompass "the men, women, and children, the rich, the poor, and the destitute of an entire community." --  
*Michael Joseph Gross*

From Publishers Weekly

Finkelstein, director of Tel Aviv University's excavations at Megiddo (ancient Armageddon), and Silberman, author of a series of successful and intriguing books on the political and cultural dimensions of archeology, present for the first time to a general audience the results of recent research, which reveals more clearly that while the Bible may be the most important piece of Western literature--serving concrete political, cultural and religious purposes--many of the events recorded in the Old Testament are not historically accurate. Finkelstein and Silberman do not aim to undermine the Bible's import, but to demonstrate why it became the basic document for a distinct religious community under particular political circumstances. For example, they maintain that the Exodus was not a single dramatic event, as described in the second book of the Bible, but rather a series of occurrences over a long period of time. The Old Testament account is, according to the authors, neither historical truth nor literary fiction, but a powerful expression of memory and hope constructed to serve particular political purposes at the time it was composed. The authors claim quite convincingly that the kingdoms of Israel and Judah became radically different regions even before the time of King David; the northern lands were densely populated, with a booming agriculture-based economy, while the southern region was sparsely populated by migratory pastoral groups. Furthermore, they contend, "we still have no hard archaeological evidence--despite the unparalleled biblical description of its grandeur--that Jerusalem was anything more than a modest highland village in the time of David, Solomon, and Rehoboam." Fresh, stimulating and highly engaging, this book will hold greatest appeal for readers familiar with the Bible, in particular the Old Testament--unfortunately, a shrinking percentage of the population. 16 pages of b&w photos not seen by PW. Agent, Carol Mann.

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From [Booklist](#)

Unlike the millions who revere the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) as the word of God, Finkelstein and Silberman approach it as a distinctly human record, one bearing the marks not of careful historians but rather of impassioned visionaries struggling to wrest transcendent meaning out of the whirlwind of events.

Following a trail of evidence uncovered in recent decades by archaeologists working throughout the Near East, the authors find no corroboration for the biblical accounts of Abraham or Joseph or Moses. And although archaeology does verify the historical reality of David and Solomon, it exposes their empire as a mere shadow of that ascribed to them in Scripture. Clue by clue, a pattern of discrepancies accumulates separating archaeology from Scripture, so revealing the authorial fingerprint of an embattled group of religious leaders, fighting valiantly against political treachery and spiritual apostasy. The authors argue forcefully that these guardians of orthodoxy forged a powerful new testimony for their faith, fashioning inherited traditions and recent developments into one magnificent--but profoundly ahistorical--saga. A significant, if controversial, contribution to cross-disciplinary studies of history and religion. *Bryce Christensen*

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