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Introduction

In both Judaism and Christianity there is a close relationship between utopia and holocaust. This is nowhere more evident than when one looks at the paradise-like existence promised to the Israelites in the Holy Land, at the beginning of the Bible, and the blessed existence promised to believers in the Book of Revelation at the end of the Bible. In the case of the Holy Land, God's promise of the idealized life for the Israelites is closely connected to His command that the idolaters be totally destroyed. In the case of heaven and the New Jerusalem, the promise of an ideal existence for the elect is an integral part of evildoers being condemned and sent to hell. In either case, the ideal leaves no room for its opposite. In the following text, I will explore how, in the biblical account, we progress from the Holy Land at the beginning of the Bible to the heaven and hell envisioned in the Book of Revelation at its end.

Before proceeding, it may be useful to define my terms. By "utopia," I mean an idealized existence found in the perfect society, in the perfect state of being. This may be the best possible society, or state of being, on earth. It may also involve a vision of the absolutely perfect society or state of being, which, although not possible in the world as we find it, is seen as having been possible in some past state of existence, or being possible in some future state of existence. In both the case of the Holy Land and the New Jerusalem, the dreams of utopia are not an end in themselves, but are also means of avoiding destruction (in the case of the Holy Land) or the fires of hell (in the case of the New Jerusalem). In this respect, utopia also becomes a means of salvation.

Salvation and utopia are in both of these cases closely connected to the total elimination of vilified groups. In the case of the Holy Land, God commands that they all be killed. In the case of the Armageddon and the final realization of the ideal existence for the elect in heaven or the New Jerusalem, evildoers are eliminated from earth and sent down to hell where they will be punished forever. In other words, these groups suffer what has come to be identified as a "holocaust." Developed in the context of ancient Greek religious practices, the term "holocaust" means to bring a burnt offering, or to be offered as a whole burnt offering.[1] Chamoux gives some idea as to the meaning of this word as it was used to describe a particular religious ritual when he writes that in Hellenic polytheism the gods were divided into two broad categories: the gods of the sky (*uranian*) and the gods of the underworld (*chthonian*). The gods of the sky were considered to be helpful to humankind and those of the underworld maleficent. Worshippers consequently partook in sacrifices to the deities of the sky and shared the flesh of the victim, while in the *chthonian* sacrifice, offered to dangerous gods, the entire sacrifice was offered to the divinity, with the entire sacrificial offering being consumed by fire.[2]

Thus, the term "holocaust" essentially referred to a burnt offering that involved the total consumption by fire of the sacrifice being offered to the gods. It was part of a religious ritual intended to placate a deity, which in turn would permit a community to avert danger and find harmony with the universal order. It involved the sacrifice of one being so that another could draw on the benefits promised by the force or forces that controlled the fate of humankind.

The term has been applied to different cases of mass destruction that involved the creation of an ideal environment for a specific group of peoples. Thus, B.W. Anderson applies the term to describe mass destructions carried out by the early Israelites in their endeavour to dedicate their territorial base to their tribal God, Yahweh,[3] and thereby create an environment in which they would be assured of God's blessings. The term was applied to the destruction of witches in late Medieval Europe as Christian authorities sought to protect Christians against the onslaught of Satan, and thereby save Christendom from the fires of hell.[4] The term was applied to the destruction of Ukrainian farmers under Stalin when he targeted them as enemies who were thwarting his efforts to turn the Soviet Union into a proletarian utopia.[5] It was applied to Hitler's attempt to eliminate European Jewry as he sought to achieve Germany's salvation through transforming it into a tribal society.[6] In all these cases a particular group was targeted as an enemy that had to be eliminated so as to achieve the well-being of a group that saw itself as elect or special.

This drive to destroy a group so as to achieve the well-being of another is nowhere more clearly enunciated than in the command of God to the Israelites, when He states that, in the cities that He grants to them as their inheritance, they "shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, lest they teach you according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God." (Deut. 20: 16-18). Sinning against the Lord, of course, would result in the Israelites being punished rather than rewarded, rewarded so abundantly that in the Holy Land they would enjoy the next best thing to Paradise.

Paradise, as depicted in the Book of Genesis, showed two people, the father and mother of humankind, Adam and Eve, living under blessed conditions. They had no need for clothes. They suffered neither disease nor death. They both lived off the bountifulness of nature in the Garden of Eden, where God walked with them. This blessed situation was conditional upon their keeping God's commandment. It was terminated with their breaking God's commandment, upon which they were expelled into the world as we know it.

While founded in the world as we know it, the Holy Land was to offer the Israelites some of the conditions approximating Paradise. As in the case of Paradise, these conditions were to be granted to them only if they abided by the laws of God, as handed to them through the Laws of Moses. Should they do so, their fields would be fruitful, their livestock would multiply, and health and a good life would be theirs. They would be blessed above all other peoples. Deviation from the laws, however, would lead to God turning against them and punishing them, as Adam and Eve had been punished for their disobedience.

In addition to differences in the conditions under which people lived, there are also significant differences in the way in which Paradise and the Holy Land were founded. In regard to Paradise, the Book of Genesis suggests that this was a way of life God had intended for people if they remained in harmony with His laws. The Holy Land, on the other hand, was established through war, with the deity actively participating in the attempt to totally destroy the adherents

of other deities so as to certify that the people He especially loved and had chosen as His own would not be tempted to fall away from Him and thereby incur His punishment rather than His blessing. The Book of Joshua and part of Deuteronomy describe how the early Israelites carried out God's command. That is, they describe the slaughter of the idolaters on the territory selected for the worship of Israel's tribal deity.

In the Book of Revelation, at the end of the Bible, the holocaust does not so much involve people being killed as their being sent to hell and eternal perdition. In this case, the writer John, in exile on the island of Patmos, envisages massive battles in which Christ the Lamb, representing the power and vitality of God, enters into battle against the forces of evil, of Satan, "Lucifer." In this case, people may be killed. However, their death is only temporary. Let me explain. In John's view, wicked people on earth, spurred on by the source of all evil, Satan, continually foil the good deeds aspired to by the followers of Christ. In fact, they do worse; they persecute the followers of Christ. Such persecution, according to John, will continue until the end of time, or until the return of Christ, who then will do battle against the anti-Christ and all the forces of evil allied with him. Rivers of blood will be spilled and Satan and his forces will eventually be vanquished. This, however, will not bring about the final containment of evil, which will come following the day of judgement when all people, including those who have died, will be judged. After that, all who have done evil will be cast into hell with Satan, whom they had served while alive. Here they will be punished forever. The followers of Christ, however, will go to heaven and eternal bliss.

As in the case of the Holy Land, the destruction of one group is intricately linked with the ideal existence to be attained by another, with the attainment of heaven being an integral part of the elimination of the wicked. The destruction of the wicked, together with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, are part and parcel of a process leading to the salvation of those who are adherents of the true religion. It will be part of the destruction of the old world and the creation of the New Jerusalem that would be inhabited forever by all those who have been purified by the blood of the Lamb, who have chosen Christ as their savior, who are adherents of the true faith. The wicked, on the other hand, will be sent down to hell and eternal punishment.

The purpose of this work is to explore how we get from Joshua as savior to Christ as savior; to explore how we get from the ideal existence promised in the Holy Land to the blessed state promised to true believers in heaven and the New Jerusalem. To trace this progression, I will use primarily the biblical text to guide my exploration. My main reason for doing so is to avoid becoming involved in the ongoing controversy concerning to what extent the biblical record is myth and to what extent it is literal truth. People who believe the latter are generally described as fundamentalist Christians. The former view is increasingly being forwarded in particular by biblical archaeologists who seek to relegate the Bible to myth and to write the history of the Holy Land based on the archaeological artefact.[7]

To provide the reader with an insight into the nature of the debate, I will briefly explore some of the issues raised. Doing so will give the reader an insight into my own approach and my reasons for adopting it. To begin, it would be helpful to mention that the biblical narrative of the

Israelite conquest of ancient Palestine was written down several centuries after the event. It would be logical to assume, therefore, that the account was condensed and altered as it was orally passed from generation to generation. Also, somewhat different accounts of the Israelite conquest would, no doubt, have emerged over time. Thus we find that the Book of Judges presents a somewhat different version of the Israelite conquest of biblical Palestine than do other books in the Old Testament. Albrecht Alt and the German school of biblical scholars concluded from the different accounts presented in the Bible that there was no military conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, but rather a gradual and pacific penetration.[8] Other biblical scholars took issue with Alt's interpretation. This was true in particular of William Albright, who, as leader of what came to be known as the biblical archaeology movement, was convinced he could settle the issue by applying what he saw as the scientifically rigorous methods of archaeological research to biblical scholarship.[9]

 Ever since modern topographical research methods began to be used in archaeological studies more than a century ago, scholars have endeavoured to locate the cities the Bible mentions as having been destroyed by Joshua and to identify the "destruction layers" from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries BC that might be attributed to the Israelite conquest. Albright and his followers adopted almost exclusively the conquest model presented in the Book of Joshua.[10] Albright's basic premise was that the Bible's account was correct and that all he had to do was find evidence of the different cities destroyed in ancient Palestine and date them. He would thereby prove the historical accuracy of the biblical record. Albright found much evidence to support the account rendered by the Book of Joshua.[11] Archaeologists such as G. Ernest Wright, John Bright, and Yigael Yadin, who shared Albright's objectives, also found evidence supporting the view that the Book of Joshua presents a fairly accurate account of events. On the basis of his findings, Yigael Yadin argued that the biblical narrative, in its broad outline, tells us that, during a certain period, the nomad Israelites attacked the city-states organization of the Holy Land and destroyed many of its cities. They set them on fire and slowly replaced them with new unfortified cities. However, they were unable to dislodge certain cities, which continued to exist in the midst of the invaders.[12]

The same conclusion was reached by scholars such as Craigie, who sought to bring together the biblical with the archaeological record. Craigie takes the view that the results of archaeological work may illuminate the background of the biblical story, filling in the gaps in the text.[13] This view is also expressed by Baez-Camargo, who argues that traditional views of the Israelite conquest of Canaan as a single, extensive campaign led by Joshua have been called into question by scholars who use the archaeological record to explore the biblical narrative. The increasingly accepted theory is that the Israelite invasion followed two main routes: one from the south, for which archaeological evidence is somewhat uncertain, and the other through the east (led by Joshua, and best described by the biblical account), across the Jordan and then towards the north.[14]

From the mid-1920s to the 1970s, Albright's approach to biblical criticism held a dominant position, particularly in North America, where his views regarding the historicity of the Book of

Joshua tended to be broadly accepted. Thereafter, a new generation of archaeologists gained prominence, which was inclined to reject Albright's view that archaeology was somehow the handmaiden of biblical scholarship, relegated to the task of expanding on the biblical record. Nor were they interested in exploring the massive destructions on which Albright and his group concentrated, but rather sought to examine the archaeological record of everyday life.

Building on findings of archaeologists who take issue with Albright and his school, William Dever proceeds to construct his own theory as to the historicity of the Book of Joshua and the origins of Israel.[15] He argues that the biblical account in the Book of Joshua may have come down to us as a record of the "house of Joseph." He adds that "these newcomers" to Canaan may have passed through Transjordan, entered Canaan via Jericho, and "intruded forcefully" into central Palestine. Such a route would explain some of the conquest narratives in the Book of Joshua. He goes on to say that, in time, the story of the house of Joseph became the story of "all Israel" because it was the only extant record. As an illustration, he suggests that the landing of the *Mayflower* might have become the story of all Americans if it had been the only record retained relating to the landing of Europeans in America.[16]

The landing of the *Mayflower* is not a mere story but is based in fact. Applying Dever's analogy to the Book of Joshua suggests that the biblical accounts of these conquests are also not mere stories but also have a basis in fact. From this perspective, Dever's account is not all that different from that of Craigie or Baez-Camargo, who argue that different tribal groups contributed to the biblical record and that, in its broad outline, the archaeological record essentially supports the account presented in the Book of Joshua. Of course, Dever calls these accounts mere "origin stories," written to show Yahweh's work on behalf of His people.[17] He does not seek to resolve the question of the extent to which these stories are factual. At the same time, he does admit that it is difficult for archaeologists to ascertain the belief systems of ancient peoples and that archaeologists are not equipped to be palaeo-theologians.

Dever has not been the only one drawing particularly on archaeological evidence to discount or improve upon the biblical record.[18] Among scholars working in the field, one of the most analytically rigorous has probably been Israel Finkelstein, who in *The Bible Unearthed* shows quite convincingly that the original creators of the biblical narrative were wrong on numerous occasions in identifying the location where the destructions mentioned in the Bible occurred. They were often wrong in identifying the time of these destructions. Also, in many of their accounts they overemphasized the significance of a particular person or event. Furthermore, creators of the biblical record were very much influenced by the environment in which they found themselves, by their religious beliefs, and by the aspirations of rulers and religious leaders at the time when the Bible was committed to written form.[19]

Finkelstein not only criticizes the biblical record, but also presents his own account of how the Holy Land was established. Dismissing the biblical account of the conquest, Finkelstein suggests various alternatives: Sea People caused the destructions mentioned in the Bible; or they were the result of an Egyptian invasion. In a footnote he mentions that they may have been caused by the Israelites.

This does not, of course, discredit the essentials of the biblical account. From the evidence Finkelstein presents, one could well conclude that the people who created the written record were very poor at dating events. Thus, the Israelite attack on Canaanite cities could well have occurred at the time when the Sea People attacked and destroyed the Hittite Empire and weakened Egypt's hold over Canaan. Furthermore, he focuses on the Sea People or perhaps the Egyptians using military force to assert their dominance. He further suggests that the Israelites, who in his view were Canaanites who were monotheists, moved into a position where they dominated at least part of the area without going to war. This doesn't tell us how and why a monotheist monarchy came to power. Nor does it correspond to what we know of the manner in which other groups gained dominance in a particular area in the past. Power and the use of force tend to be fairly universal. The biblical record tells us that force was used to assert monotheist dominance. Thus, one could well argue that the evidence Finkelstein presents to support his argument gives more credence to many parts of the biblical record rather than proves his case.

Nor does ignoring the ban,[20] as Finkelstein does, abolish the problems the extensive discussions of it, in particular in the early part of the Bible, raise for his account. If the ban was the result of a creative flash of insight by a writer of the account, what inspired it? The suggestion that it may have arisen as a possible solution to avoiding the experiences Israel had undergone isn't sufficient. Why would it arise at a time when Judah's main enemies were using expulsion rather than mass destruction as a means of sustaining their power? Why would Josiah, the king of Judah, advocate so extreme a solution at the time when he was himself in danger of losing his kingdom? If creators of the biblical account were the cynics Finkelstein often suggests, would they want to put such ideas into the mind of their enemies?

In any case, the reforms King Josiah undertook are a far cry from the destruction evident in the ban described in the first part of the Bible. The fact that he could undertake these changes without significant protest suggests that they were in keeping with an older, stronger tradition. Furthermore, the Bible has a much more satisfactory timing of these ideas and/or events than is suggested by Finkelstein. They occurred during the early period, when the idea of sacrificing conquered peoples to the gods would have been significantly more acceptable than it was at the time of Josiah. At the same time, the Bible also presents an idea of when the ancient Israelites gave up the ban and used other means to deal with the original inhabitants of the land. The biblical account, as such, has a greater inherent logic than is evident in Finkelstein's account.

 Finkelstein remarks that the Jews at first differentiated themselves from other peoples by not eating pork,[21] and suggests that this later evolved into a full religion. This doesn't tell us how dietary laws led to a coherent religious outlook different from those of Judah's neighbours. Also, while Finkelstein's comment is interesting, it doesn't reflect at all the pattern whereby we have seen other major religions develop. No matter whether we look at Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Zoroastrianism, for example, these all involved a charismatic leader, a leader who spelled out certain principles and encouraged people to abide by them. In this respect, the accounts we have about the roles of Moses or of Joshua present a picture in the development of Judaism that is much more in keeping with our observations of the way other religions developed than is

Finkelstein's account. In fact, Josiah's reforms make much more sense when looked at, not in terms of his essentially creating a new religion, but in terms of the whole biblical story of people accepting a particular religion, of gradually falling away from it and then being brought back through radical religious reforms.

Also, archaeology doesn't provide all the answers and, in fact, at times raises questions rather than provides answers. An example is the First Temple, the existence of which Finkelstein admits to, despite the lack of archaeological evidence for it.[22] I would argue that there is good reason to conclude that the role of war and the ban in the conquest of the Holy Land also can fit into this category. The numerous destructions many of these centres underwent, as well as the manner in which recorders of the biblical account created the record, as we know it, would point in that direction.

Furthermore, in the Bible we have observations on social customs, religious practices, and on other aspects of the life of the early Israelites. The presence of these details can hardly be explained in an account that, as Finkelstein suggests, was created essentially to further the territorial interests of Judah and the dynastic objectives of its monarchy.

Problems are also evident in other areas of the accounts presented by archaeologists such as Finkelstein. They show up in the questionable assumptions they make at different times and in the evidence they accept and reject. They appear in arguments one archaeologist makes to prove his point only to have another archaeologist, coming from a different perspective, using different data or even the same data, prove him wrong.

Both Dever's and Finkelstein's accounts demonstrate that although archaeology has been quite successful in pointing out shortcomings of the Bible as history, it has been less successful in presenting a satisfactory alternative account on the establishment of the Holy Land. In part, this stems from the archaeological method itself. Dark argues that the material past does not speak for itself; it speaks only through the beliefs, ideas, and frame of reference of the archaeologist.[23] Commenting on the usefulness of archaeology in Bible criticism, Boling states that what archaeology can do for biblical study is provide a physical context in time and place. Inscriptions and other evidence are of exceptional importance for the biblical background and for the occasional mention of biblical places and names. The remainder of the archaeological record, however, leaves room for interpretation, which is very much influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of the people doing the interpreting.[24]

Furthermore, although archaeology can provide us with considerable information on the material past as this relates to the Bible, it has been less successful in providing us with information on the beliefs of the ancient Hebrews. For this, the main source is the Bible, which reflects the religious beliefs of the people who left us this record and their views regarding the role Yahweh played in the life of His people. Boling informs us that, when writing the Book of Joshua, the writers drew on a variety of older sources.[25] This could help explain why we find different and, at times, seemingly contradictory accounts of the conquest. Nor are such contradictions necessarily a denial that the conquest described in the Book of Joshua has a basis in fact. To reach a conclusion in this regard, it would probably be more sensible to look at the

overall biblical account. This suggests that the events described in the Book of Joshua constituted, not an isolated incident, but part of Israelite practice for a prolonged period.[26]

Craigie argues that if the historian's task were simply to resolve the tension inherent in the biblical narrative, it could be argued that the Books of Joshua and Judges give complementary, but considerably oversimplified, pictures of the history of the Hebrew conquest and settlement. The Book of Joshua provides an overview of a major military campaign that brought the Israelites into the Promised Land. At the same time, however, Hebrew control was restricted to a few areas. The summary and the beginning of Judges and the narratives that follow present an account of a more prolonged period of consolidation after the initial conquest.[27]

What concerns us in this study is not only the chronological record but also the motives of the people who "intruded forcefully" into biblical Palestine. Although written from the perspective of the belief system of the people of the time, the Book of Joshua provides us with an insight into the objectives of these invaders. The scriptural account informs us that their goal was to slaughter all the people who did not believe in Yahweh and were not members of the Tribes of Israel. Although we cannot ascertain from either the biblical or the archaeological record to what extent the invaders followed these directives, we can say that, from the evidence they had, the writers of the Book of Joshua concluded that the invaders had followed these directives. We are also informed as to why they followed these directives: they saw in this a way of ensuring that the Israelites would receive the blessings of Yahweh and avoid His punishment.

This does not mean that they were totally accurate in their presentation. The archaeological evidence is persuasive enough to convince us that these accounts were very much influenced by the beliefs of the people who prepared them and by the social conditions under which they were prepared. At the same time, the archaeological evidence suggests that the writers of the biblical account brought together events that occurred at different times, attributing them to the actions of a major, decisive leader acting under God's guidance. Such focussing and magnification are probably natural for an orally transmitted record. Despite these shortcomings, the evidence strongly suggests that war and the ban had a role in establishing monotheism in what came to be called the Holy Land.

There is good reason to believe, therefore, that the holocaust described in Deuteronomy and the Book of Joshua has some basis in the historical past, expressing the aspiration of Israelites of the time. However, this past was interpreted in the light of the Jewish faith and with the purpose of perpetuating this faith. By contrast, the Bible makes quite clear that the mass destructions described in the Book of Revelation never happened. At the same time, the biblical record also shows that this envisaged destruction evolved from the historical experience of the Israelites. It grew out of the aspiration of the Hebrew community to realize the promise they saw God having given unto them as His special elect.

The question this study poses is: how, in the Bible, do we get from the destruction of the idolaters and the establishment of Israel in the Holy Land to the destruction of sinners and the establishment of the New Jerusalem in heaven? There is a considerable distance between the two. That is, one is part of God's choice to be the God of Israel, to care for the children of Israel as a

special people. It is part and parcel of the Israelites' attempt to create a special environment on earth where they could best serve their God and in turn enjoy the next best thing to Paradise.

The concept of the New Jerusalem is an essential part of creating a world in which the elect will forever be able to serve God. They would no longer be harassed and misled from the way of the Lord either by Satan or by the presence of evildoers in their midst. Rather, they would be initiated into a world where there is no temptation, a world void of corruptness. In order to attain this level of purity, all corruptness will be totally eliminated from the realm to be occupied by the elect. The people and spirits who are the cause of the corruptness will not die but, rather, will be sent to hell, where they will be punished forever.

To explore the progression in the Bible from one ideal state to another, from one holocaust to another, I will commence by presenting a summary of the biblical account relating the destruction of the idolaters. Following this, I will do the same with the Book of Revelation, illustrating the relationship between the destruction of non-believers, of Armageddon, and the creation of the New Earth and the New Jerusalem, the ideal world for Christian believers.

Following this, I will explore influences that may have caused recorders of the biblical record to speak of a Paradise-like existence in time and space, in the earthly domain, in the case of the first holocaust, and of salvation after death and in the eternal sphere, in the case of the holocaust that would put an end to the world as we know it. Basic to either case is the human relationship to God, in particular God's use of reward and punishment to influence people's behaviour. In this regard, a reward may be seen as something that is valued being earned by a person or groups for behaviour that is approved of by the person or entity judging this behaviour. By punishment, I mean negative consequences ensuing from this evaluation. In both these instances, the entity judging the behaviour is God, or Yahweh, who is seen to be the universal and only true God in the universe.

As both reward and punishment tell us something about humankind and God as depicted in the Bible, I shall seek to give an idea as to how each is presented in the biblical record. I shall explore different ways in which God uses reward and punishment to influence people's behaviour. At the same time, I will seek to explore the manner in which the biblical record was created and how this contributed to the evolution of ideas and concepts found therein.

Also, I will explore the idea of the savior as developed in the biblical text. For example, in the Book of Joshua, the Israelite leader gives evidence of possessing few supernatural powers. His power lies in his ability to persuade the tribal deity, Yahweh, to war on behalf of his people. The deity responds in marvellous ways. Joshua himself, however, remains human in every sense of the word as he goes about destroying the idolaters so as to establish a locale on earth where the Israelites could enjoy the blessings of Yahweh. In the Book of Revelation, at the end of the Bible, we have Christ the Savior, the Son of God, doing battle with the Anti-Christ and the forces of evil allied with him. Both Christ and Satan in this context are supernatural forces beyond our everyday ken. The battles they fight take place in heaven as well as on earth. The saints, consisting for the most part of dead people who during their life had accepted Christ as their savior, will join the angels in heaven to worship God. Satan and his followers, consisting of

resurrected evildoers and evildoers who are still alive, will be banished to hell where they will suffer eternal punishment. The struggle as well as rewards and punishment are beyond our everyday experiences and can only be imagined.

The objective of this study is to shed light on the nature of the relationship between the promises of an ideal existence for the Israelites and the destruction of the idolaters at the beginning of the Bible, and the rewards offered true believers and corresponding punishment to be handed out to non-believers, as described in the Book of Revelation. In doing so, the study gives evidence of how a community alters itself to adapt basic elements of its belief system to the ever-changing circumstances of its environment. Significantly, it provides an insight into how efforts by Jewish religious leaders to sustain basic elements of their faith laid the basis for Christianity, and with it a vision of the ideal existence radically different from that of traditional Judaism.