

ing excavation sites with biblical places. There are many examples of how recent archaeological discoveries have illuminated the biblical text, like the mention of the Levites in the book of Judges alongside the current excavations at Shiloh and the recent discovery of the *Yeruba'al* (Gideon) inscription from Khirbet al-Ra'i, (e.g., Rollston, Christopher, Yosef Garfinkel, Kyle H. Keimer, Gillan Davis, and Saar Ganor, "The *Jerubba'al* Inscription from *Khirbet al-Ra'i*: A Proto-Canaanite (Early Alphabetic) Inscription," *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* 2 [2021]:1–15). Archaeology adds context to the text, and the text adds context to the archaeological finds. Thus, the reading and interpretation of texts and artifacts are not one-way. Archaeological finds should also be interpreted in light of the textual evidence in a legitimate dialogue.

Though I do not agree with all the synthesis Dever suggests in his book, I consider his proposal for an open dialogue between biblical archaeology and textual studies as a balanced way forward. Here I would just highlight the problematic method of reading the text allegorically to fit with one's interpretation of the current archaeological data. Of course, literalism and idealism are not the best method either. While one may disagree with Dever on his presuppositions on the text's authority, historical reliability, and origin of composition, a critical and open-minded reader will find this survey of archaeology valuable. He again succeeds in bringing together biblical text and its archaeological context. He also succeeds at highlighting the timeless and universal nature of the principles found in the text, indicating to the reader why the biblical message is still relevant. While neither the traditionalist nor the nihilist will be satisfied with his proposal, those willing to momentarily place their preconceptions aside will find Dever's attempt to understand the relationship between the artifact and the text beneficial. That does not mean they will agree with the specific applicability of his method, but it does provide a positive way to start or continue the conversation between these two disciplines.

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Doak, Brian R. *Ancient Israel's Neighbors*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020. 211 pp. Paperback. USD 24.95.

Brian Doak, author of *Ancient Israel's Neighbors*, has been a pastor, holds a PhD from Harvard University in Near Eastern languages and civilizations, and has worked on an archaeological excavation in Israel. He is currently vice president of George Fox Digital and a professor of biblical studies at George Fox University, where he teaches courses on ancient language, the HB and literature, history of interpretation, comparative religion in the ancient world, iconography, archaeology, and history of the ancient Near East. This book is

part of “Essentials of Biblical Studies,” a series published by Oxford University Press. The whole set of eight small books provides a general introduction to the Bible. It is designed as a supplementary resource for students who have an interest in the ancient Near East and biblical history and provides an introduction to the historical, archaeological, and sociocontextual aspects of ancient Israel, interpretive and comparative methods, understandings in early Christianity, and the Jewish and Greco-Roman contextual worlds of the NT writings.

The book comprises eight chapters, with one for each of the following groups: the Canaanites, Arameans, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines, and Phoenicians. This is a general study of these particular nations that bordered ancient Israel. The author follows the same pattern in each chapter. He gives a brief general introduction of the mentioned nation, then emphasizes its historical and archaeological background, followed by an analysis of how that particular nation is related to Israel and other nations mentioned in the HB. Every chapter ends with a section in which he explains “what happened” to each one of the nations. The book tries to clarify some geography issues, discusses vital terms such as *nation*, *state*, and *tribe*, and addresses other problems describing national borders and neighbors in the ancient and modern world. The Bible presents these neighbors in different and conflicting ways: sometimes, they are friends or relatives of Israel; at other times, they are enemies. The author takes us on a journey through history so that the biblical narrative may be better understood as we imagine how the biblical characters saw themselves in the face of others.

In the opening chapter, “Israel’s Neighbors and the Problem of the Past,” the author deals with the boundaries of ancient civilizations and neighborhoods “because nations surrounding Israel appear very frequently throughout the Bible and play a crucial role in Israel’s story” (2). Throughout the entire Bible, there are many references to borders between nations. God himself divided peoples into nations and established borders (e.g., Deut 32:8; Hebrew *gbl*). Moreover, it is noteworthy that the Hebrew word for “wall” (*homah*) appears over one hundred times in the HB and always refers to walls built to protect a nation. In discussing Israel’s neighbors, Doak differentiates between a nation and a state (6). He believes that *nation* implies more complex social groups, not just places or people. He insistently tries to emphasize the difference between these two terms. But even though his attempts can be noticed in every chapter, he does not provide a satisfactory answer in this volume regarding the status of these ancient people.

Chapter two deals with the Canaanites, the early inhabitants of the Syrian-Palestinian coast, including southern Phoenicia, who were the descendants of Canaan (Gen 10:15–18; 15:18–21; Exod 13:11). Informed by archaeology and historical records, Doak’s main point is to identify who the Canaanites were and what happened to them. The broad term *Canaanites*

included Jebusites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Girgashites. They were a mixed group of people who had dispersed from Sidon in the north to Gaza in the south, and from the Mediterranean coast in the west to the Dead Sea in the east. They were closely linked to the Amorites of the mountain region, called *Martu* by the Sumerians. In this chapter, Doak also points out the urbanization of Canaan that began in the early Bronze Age II (2900–2700 BCE). When the Israelites arrived at the end of the Bronze Age (1550–1200 BCE), Canaan was made up of a diverse population, made up of several tribes of the Canaanites and the Amorites. In this period, many settlements in Canaan (e.g., Jericho and Hazor) were veritable city-states ruled by local kings. He also stresses the influence Egypt had on Canaan during this time (23). Likewise, he emphasizes that the Canaanites influenced the religion of ancient Israel. For instance, the structural pattern of the Jerusalemite temple has the same basic Canaanite structure, with pillars and towers.

Informed by archaeology and extrabiblical sources, Doak illuminates the culture of ancient Israel. A good example is the artifacts from Ugarit, which give us a glimpse of the religious culture of ancient Canaan, where the Israelites developed as a nation. This is the central point from the archaeological section of this chapter. Doak also identifies the Canaanite language (Proto-Sinaitic, also referred to as Sinaitic or Proto-Canaanite) as one of the main branches of the Northwest Semitic language family. Furthermore, the Ebla tablets, discovered in 1976 in Syria, indicated that the Eblaite language was ancient Canaanite and shed light on the language and culture of biblical Israel. Likewise, the discovery of some artifacts, such as the tablets at Ras Shamra (formerly Ugarit) in Syria in 1929, revealed many details about the language, literature, and religion of Canaan, including “practices such as animal sacrifice, rituals involving priests, and various other things people said and did with relation to their deities” (29). This helps us understand why the Canaanite religion was so attractive and easy to follow and why the Israelites were told to avoid all contact with the Canaanites (e.g., Deut 7:1–6). Doak emphasizes that analyzing the relationship of the Ugaritic texts with the HB can help us more clearly understand the religion of ancient Israel.

The following chapter is dedicated to the Arameans. The HB mentions the Arameans as a people from Mesopotamia (the Aram-Naharaim, or “Aram of the two rivers”) and the surrounding regions such as Syria, Persia, Jordan, and the mountains of Lebanon. At the outset, Doak emphasizes that “the Arameans were never ... a single nation or group,” but a region “with local centers of power spread throughout contemporary Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, at major cities such as Damascus and Hamath” (51). He explains that the Arameans were closely related to the Israelites. Abraham appears among the eastern Arameans in Mesopotamia, in Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:27–31). Furthermore, the patriarchs are portrayed as originating from these relatives, who are always called the Arameans in the book of Genesis.

In this chapter, Doak deals emphasizes language and religion as the main points of Aramean influence in the history of Israel. The Arameans had their own language, Aramaic, very similar to the Hebrew and Phoenician languages. It was as important as the people who spoke it and even became the lingua franca of the biblical lands in the first half of the first millennium BCE. It was widely used in the courts and administration of the Babylonian and Persian empires, but often with the Phoenician alphabet. The sources that allow us to reconstruct the history and language of the Arameans are of three types: (1) archaic inscriptions found in northern Syria and dating back to the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE mention that chronicles exist in Assyrian at the same time; (2) references found in the HB, such as in Daniel and Ezra; and (3) imperial Aramaic (under the Persian Empire, 539–323 BCE), which was the official language from Egypt to India. Aramaic also played a role in the area during the Roman period and was spoken by Jesus and his early followers in the NT.

I think that the most important point in this chapter is the religious influence of Aram in Israel's history. The author points out, for instance, that the book of Joshua indicates that the Aramean religious context exposed Terah's family to idolatry while they lived in Mesopotamia (Josh 24:2). This idol worship, however, was not exclusively Aramaic; it was a custom carried on by the Israelites, as seen in the biblical period of the judges (Judg 17:5; 18:14–20), the monarchy (1 Sam 19:13, 16), and even the postexilic prophets (Zach 10:1–2).

In chapter four, Doak addresses the Ammonites. The first mention of this people group in the Bible is in Gen 19:37–38. The Ammonites were the descendants of Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot, and his own youngest daughter (Gen 19:38). Thus, the Ammonites were related to the Israelites since Lot was the nephew of Abraham, the patriarch of the Israelites. Despite this relationship, in Scripture they are more often counted as enemies than friends. Even though this is one of the shortest chapters, I think it is one of the most important of the book because of its discussion on archaeology. On pages 52–62, Doak shows how the material remains indicate that Ammon flourished during the Neo-Babylonian Empire. If he is right, this contradicts the view, dominant for decades, that Transjordan was either destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II or suffered a rapid decline after he conquered Judah. More recent evidence seems to suggest that Ammon enjoyed continuity from the Neo-Babylonian period to the Persian. Also, the author points out that little mention is made of the Ammonites during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods.

The fifth chapter is on the Moabites, the descendants of Lot and his eldest daughter (Gen 19:37). The Moabites prospered for a long time, managed to spread across the plateau, and conquered several peoples, expanding their territory to the north. The Moabites also appear in close association with

the Ammonites, their closest relatives. In this chapter, Doak spends more pages discussing the biblical text. He emphasizes the relationship between the Israelites and the Moabites as recorded in several Scriptures. According to the Bible, there were periods of friendly coexistence and economic and cultural exchange between the two peoples. For instance, on one occasion God prevented Moses from attacking the Moabites, who at that time enjoyed God's protection (Deut 2:9). But the Moabites, as well as the Ammonites, were severely rebuked by God for rising against Israel (Deut 23:3–6). They were not hospitable to the Israelites when they left Egypt. Furthermore, Balak, the Moabite king, even hired the false prophet Balaam to curse the people of Israel (Num 22–24).

As expected, in the archaeological section, Doak presents an analysis of the so-called Mesha Stele or Moabite Stone (c. 840 BCE). It is “the only such royal dedicatory inscription from a native king of its length” in the land of Canaan (102) and is an unparalleled resource for understanding the Moabite language, script style, and literature. I think Doak could have explained a little more about the contributions of the Moabite Stone to the study of the HB and the Hebrew language. I would point out three points in this regard: (1) because of this inscription, we now know that Moabite, and maybe also Edomite and Ammonite, were languages close to Biblical Hebrew (especially to the dialects of the northern Israelite tribes); (2) the stele is a record from the ninth century BCE, and it fits into the storyline of the book of Kings, providing invaluable additional data; and finally, (3) its style, language, and syntax resemble those of the text of Kings.

In chapter six, Doak gives a long analysis of the Edomites, who were probably the closest neighboring nation to Israel, according to the HB. The descendants of Edom, or Esau (Gen 36:1–43), with others who joined them, formed the Edomites and settled in the territory south of Transjordan. As the book of Genesis indicates, Edom was a prosperous land long before any Israelite king reigned. The kingdom of Edom bordered the Judean Desert and the Dead Sea, the Sinai Peninsula, the Syrian Desert, and the Gulf of Aqaba. This same region was also called Mount Seir. The Edomites organized themselves very early into tribal units. As a nation, they had kings long before the Israelites (Gen 36:15–40; 1 Chr 1:43–54). In the Bible, the Edomites are portrayed primarily as opponents of the Israelites, despite their ethnic relation as ancient brothers. Notwithstanding this hostility, the Mosaic law granted brotherhood rights to the Edomites until the third generation (Deut 23:7–8) and to the Moabites, the Ammonites, and their descendants until the tenth generation (Deut 23:3–6).

In this section of *Ancient Israel's Neighbors*, Doak highlights two main points. The first one is the Edomite writing system—a northwest Semitic Canaanite language very similar to Hebrew and Phoenician, spoken in southwestern Jordan during the second and first millennia BCE. The Edomites

are also mentioned in extrabiblical sources. The author points out some inscriptions found in the Gulf of Elath (Aqaba) dating back to the seventh/sixth century BCE, where the reminiscence of the Edomite language may be known only from a small corpus such as impressions on seals and ostraca, text that “seems to concern a type of food used in a religious ritual for the Edomite deity Qos” (127). The second point regards geographic data on Edom. The author shows how the biblical data indicates that the land of the Edomites was not invaded until the rise of Assyria in the geopolitical scene, when the Edomites had to pay tribute to the Assyrians as a vassal state. I found Doak’s discussion of the Edomites to be lacking a description of the Edomite economy since it is believed that the Edomites extracted copper in their territory and their main economic activity was trade. Copper was a precious material used in ancient times to create weapons, defensive shields, agricultural tools, and much more. Recent archaeological studies confirm not only that Edom existed during the twelfth or eleventh century BCE, when the Bible describes it, but also that it was a powerful and technologically advanced kingdom. In addition, the Edomites charged fees to ensure the safety of commercial caravans crossing the region.

In the seventh chapter, Doak focuses on the Philistines, especially their origin and relation with Israel in political and military matters, art, and polytheistic religion. It is noteworthy that the term Philistine appears more than 280 times in the HB, indicating their important role in Israel’s history and society. Philistine, from the Hebrew *pelishti*, which most often appears in its plural form *pelishtim*, is probably a type of ethnic adjective derived from the territorial designation of this people. However, Doak is right when he states that “we do not possess any native story from any of these groups explaining their homeland, identity, or motives” (149–150). It is not possible to accurately determine the meaning of *pelishti/pelishtim*, since its etymological origin remains unknown. The Egyptian word *prst* may be the first known designation for the ancient Philistines and may indicate that the Philistines were one of the Sea Peoples who attempted to invade Egypt during the reign of Ramesses III in approximately 1200 BCE (150–151). Archaeological ventures confirm that the Philistines were among the peoples who tried to invade Egypt in the late second millennium BCE. It is also true that these peoples are called “peoples of the sea” in Egyptian inscriptions and devastated several territories in Egypt. There is little doubt that the Philistines were the most notable of these peoples. It was during this period that the Philistines settled south of Canaan.

In this chapter, Doak does not mention the language spoken by the Philistines, maybe because very little is known about it. It was probably a Canaanite dialect. Later, the dialect used in that region was replaced by Aramaic. On the other hand, Doak does explore the rich Philistine artistic and religious traditions. The Philistines worshipped Semitic deities such as

Dagon, with temples in Gaza and Ashdod (Judg 16:21–30; 1 Sam 5:1–5); Ashtoreth, with the sanctuary at Ashkelon; and Baal-Zebub, with a shrine at Ekron (2 Kgs 1:2–6). All these gods were worshipped in the ancient Near East. This may mean that the Philistines adopted the religion that already existed in Canaan. Some of these ancient temples could still be seen during the Hellenistic period. The Philistines are mentioned one last time in the Bible by the prophet Zechariah after the Babylonian captivity (Zech 9:5–6). Already during the Hellenistic period, the main cities of Philistia were inhabited by a mixed population.

Chapter eight is on the Phoenicians. It is common knowledge that the Phoenician civilization stood out for its skill in maritime navigation and production of a sophisticated alphabet. The Phoenicians developed in the northwestern coastal region of the land of Canaan, in modern-day Lebanon. Some scholars have suggested that the Phoenicians migrated to this area, while others say that their culture evolved from Canaanite peoples in the same area during the Bronze Age. Doak, on the other hand, calls the “northern coastal residents ‘Canaanites’” (173). There is no scholarly consensus on their origin. Interestingly, the HB does not mention the name “Phoenicians.” They appear in ancient Egyptian inscriptions as Keft, which may be derived from *fenkhu* (natives of Canaan), and also in ancient Greek writings as *phoinix*, which means “a palm tree” or “the land of palm trees.” Phoenicia was a strip of land along the shores of the Mediterranean, from the Eleutherus River (also known as Nahr El Kabir) in the north to the highest part of Carmel in the south. They are also mentioned in the NT (Acts 11:19; 15:3; 21:2). One of the reasons why so little is known about the Phoenicians is that there are almost no written records from them, only inscriptions and temple dedications. Furthermore, although archaeologists have found thousands of inscriptions on shrines, they are of little value for reconstructing history because they are nearly all the same. What is known is that their culture showed a particular type of dedication to the gods.

Doak points out that Phoenicia was made up of more than twenty cities, like Ugarit, Byblos (also called Gebal), Sidon, and Tyre. These cities were independent of each other, and their political regimes varied. Byblos was under Egyptian control for a long time; Ugarit became a cosmopolitan area; Sidon was also dominated by the Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks. The city of Tyre had good relations with Israel, and later the Tyrians ended up subordinating themselves to the Babylonians and Persians. Alexander of Macedonia then razed the city after a seven-month siege.

In the archaeological section of this chapter, Doak highlights the Phoenician writing system, as expected. He even emphasizes that their innovation with the Canaanite alphabet system “paved the way not only for many other writing systems in the Levant (including Israel’s) that borrowed the basic Phoenician script, but also west-ward into the Mediterranean Sea, as the



Greeks adapted the writing system for their alphabet” (179). The Phoenicians spread their unique alphabet throughout the Levant region yet left almost no historical record.

In the conclusion of *Ancient Israel's Neighbors*, Doak reflects on how the history of these peoples can help us understand the modern world. He points out that throughout history, humans have developed different cultures, customs, convictions, and social and political systems. Part of this development was the creation of political boundaries and social hierarchy, the main characteristics of civilization.

For those seeking a brief overview of these peoples mentioned in the Scriptures in relation to Israel, *Ancient Israel's Neighbors* is a good resource. For a deeper engagement with the ancient sources, one needs to look elsewhere, in books such as the *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, edited by Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Baker, 1998). I highly recommend Doak's book to students looking for an outline of ancient Israel from ancient Near Eastern texts and archaeology that takes into consideration its neighbors.

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Du Mez, Kristin Kobes. *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. New York, NY: LiveRight, 2020. 344 pp. + index. Hardcover. USD 24.95.

One of the most shocking moments of my career took place when, during a pastoral visit, I discovered that one of my church members was stockpiling weapons and ammunition. Barack Obama had recently been elected president, and this church member had a heavily fortified basement replete with dozens of high-powered weapons and enough ammunition for a small army—he was, as he told me, ready to shoot his way through the time of trouble. This form of militant Adventism, from a devout Adventist who served as a church leader and who claimed an Adventist pedigree stemming back generations, is more of a reflection of the militant masculinity associated with a segment of white evangelical culture, as described by author Kristin Du Mez.

The author traces the origins of this book to a Donald Trump campaign stop at her small, midwestern Bible college. Ultimately 68 percent of the white Evangelical Protestant vote went for Trump. This same demographic is reflected in the opposition to immigration reform. They shared a more negative view of immigrants than any other religious demographic. Two-thirds supported Trump's border wall. “White evangelicals are significantly more authoritarian than other religious groups, and they express confidence in their religious leaders at much higher rates than do members of other faiths” (4).