



# The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel (Archaeology and Biblical Studies)

By Israel Finkelstein

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Three decades of dialogue, discussion, and debate within the interrelated disciplines of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, ancient Israelite history, and Hebrew Bible over the question of the relevance of the biblical account for reconstructing early Israel's history have created the need for a balanced articulation of the issues and their prospective resolutions. This book brings together for the first time and under one cover, a currently emerging centrist paradigm as articulated by two leading figures in the fields of early Israelite archaeology and history. Although Finkelstein and Mazar advocate distinct views of early Israel's history, they nevertheless share the position that the material cultural data, the biblical traditions, and the ancient Near Eastern written sources are all significantly relevant to the historical quest for Iron Age Israel. The results of their research are featured in accessible, parallel syntheses of the historical reconstruction of early Israel that facilitate comparison and contrast of their respective interpretations. The historical essays presented here are based on invited lectures delivered in October of 2005 at the Sixth Biennial Colloquium of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism in Detroit, Michigan.

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

Israel Finkelstein is Professor of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University where he holds the Jacob M. Alkow Chair in the Archaeology of Israel of the Bronze and Iron Ages. He is co-director of the Megiddo excavations and the co-author of *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* and *The Bible Unearthed, Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of Its Sacred Texts* (both from Free Press). He is also a recent laureate of the Dan David Prize (2005).

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Brian Schmidt is Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient West Asian Cultures at the University of Michigan. He is the author of *Israels Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (J.C.B. Mohr/Eisenbrauns).

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