

THE FUNDAMENTALISTS  
VS.  
THE ARCHEOLOGISTS

A FEW YEARS AGO a young American archeologist friend sent me a copy of an article published in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* called “Deconstructing the Walls of Jericho,” written by Tel Aviv University archeologist Ze’ev Herzog. Here’s how it starts out:

Following seventy years of intensive excavations in the Land of Israel . . . this is what archeologists have learned: The patriarchs’ acts are legendary, the Israelites did not sojourn in Egypt or make an exodus, they did not wander in the desert, and they did not conquer the land in a military campaign. Perhaps even harder to swallow is the fact that the united monarchy of David and Solomon, which is described in the Bible as a regional power, was at most a small tribal kingdom. . . .

Most of those who are engaged in scientific work in the interlocking spheres of the Bible, archeology and the history of the Jewish people—and who once went into the field looking for proof to corroborate the Bible story—now agree that the historic events’ relation to the stages of the Jewish people’s emergence are radically different from what that story tells us.<sup>1</sup>

I found Herzog’s article so iconoclastic that I phoned my friend—himself a specialist in ancient Near Eastern archeology, who was