

Canaanites for Christmas

Become a biblical warlord on a budget

Jim Webster bears testament to how a couple of boxes of plastic figures can go a long way with a bit of imagination and a bit of biblical knowledge, demonstrating how he brewed up an entire campaign for next to nothing. So, don't be a Philistine, give it a go.

The Old Testament has been regarded as a book of poetry, a source of inspiration, a guide to those seeking to achieve social justice, and a rule of life. It has even been used as a source for wargames scenarios. This scenario comes from the Book of Judges which covers the turbulent period before the Hebrews instituted a monarchy and were an Amphictyonic League of tribes held together by religious observance. Chapter 9 of the Book of Judges is interesting because it tells the tale of Abimelech. The other Judges, whilst not necessarily upstanding citizens or even respectable people, generally fought to defend the People of Israel from their enemies and to bring them back to the worship of Yahweh. Abimelech merely attempted to set up a personal tyranny.

As always, 'Chronology' can be an issue. That being said, it is likely that Abimelech lived somewhere around 1100BC, give or take a hundred years. He was a son of Gideon, who was remembered for driving out the Midianites with a force of only three hundred men (Judges, books, 6, 7 & 8). Reading on from this incident, the Book of Judges intimates that Gideon, if he didn't actually become a King, acted in many ways as if he were. He took a large share of the booty for his personal use, had many wives, and at least seventy sons. Abimelech was a son of Gideon, but his mother was a concubine Gideon kept in the city of Shechem which was part of the area he seems to have influenced, if not formally ruled.

Shechem was an old city, perhaps forty miles north of Jerusalem. It was mentioned on a stele dating from Senusret III (1880–1840 BC) and also in the Amarna Letters of about 1350 BC. It was in a comparatively fertile area and controlled a lot of the trade routes in the hill country north of Jerusalem and south of the Sea of Galilee. In the period prior to 1300BC, it seemed the city had been the seat of power of a Canaanite warlord who used Habiru mercenaries.

In the time of Abimelech, it seems probable that the population remained largely Canaanite, and certainly retained the old religion with a temple of Baal-berith.

When Gideon died, Abimelech took his opportunity. He went to his mothers' family, and asked bluntly "Which is better for you, to have all seventy of Gideon's sons rule over you, or just one man? Remember I am your flesh and blood." With the support of his mothers' family, he won over the rest of the people of the city, who gave him 70 shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-berith as working capital. This he used "to hire reckless adventurers who became his followers". With these followers he travelled to his late father's home at Ophrah, which was about six miles south west, and butchered his brothers, only one escaping. With this, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo (which might have been a separately fortified suburb of Shechem) crowned Abimelech king.

Looking at the logistics of this, 70 shekels is not a lot of money, probably about 800g of silver, but it is a reasonable amount for a small city to speculate on the career of a young warlord in the making. If you were to convert this weight of silver into drachma, you would get less than 200 (depending on weight, fineness and so on). It is always difficult to do currency conversions across time and space, but at the siege of Potidea, the Athenians were paid a drachma a day. In normal times, a drachma would have bought a man at least four days' bread ration. From this, we can see that Abimelech wasn't leading a large force, even assuming that the money was considered a deposit, an earnest of better things to come.

Abimelech added to his small 'empire', but fell due to treachery, finally receiving a fatal injury when a woman dropped a mill stone on him as he led the attack on a tower.

This period, with its small forces, holds a considerable attraction to me. The various towns and even villages were largely independent – only when a leader's forces reached a certain size would this provoke action from the neighbouring powers. Yet in this era, the neighbours were weak: in Egypt, the 20th Dynasty had been in decline since Ramesses III, and the 21st Dynasty which came to power about 1077 BC ruled only in Lower Egypt. To the north, the Hittite empire had fallen and the Assyrians had not yet risen. A similar situation existed that still existed for David and Solomon a century or more later;

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there was a window of opportunity in which a moderately strong state could exist in this area without being crushed by greater neighbours.

THE CAMPAIGN

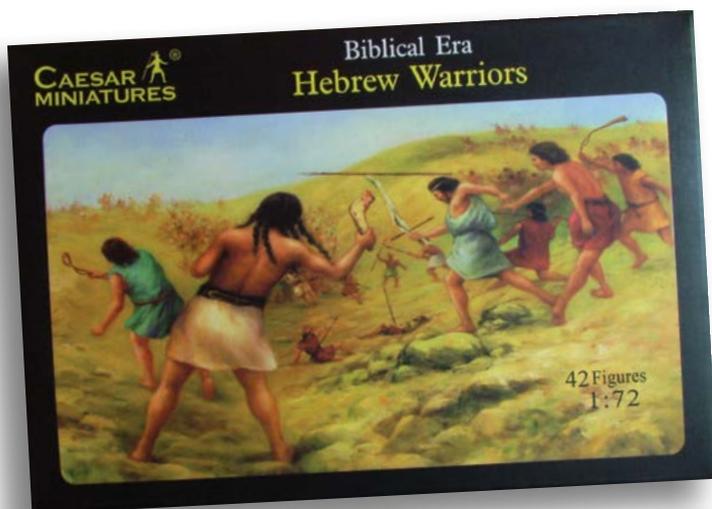
The idea is to set up a solo campaign that you can potter away with on your own when you're not busy with other things. Ideally it'll provide plenty of fun and interest and a few battles.

THE FIGURES

At this point, I'm assuming you don't have any suitable wargames figures. If you have, then use them. Indeed, if you have some that are only halfway suitable, don't be ashamed to use them. But if you haven't got any, then I'd suggest you look at the Caesar 1/72nd plastic figure set of Hebrew Warriors. You get forty-two usable figures and they always struck me as nice figures.

THE RULES

Really, use the rules you normally use. If you're starting out on Ancients then I suggest you look at two sets. One is *DBA*. If you're playing solo, don't worry if you pick up one of the early versions from eBay, all the versions work well. If you fancy looking at something a bit different, the *Basic Impetus* rules are available as a free download from <http://www.dadiepiombo.com/bie08nov.pdf>. If you're not a native English speaker, then *Basic Impetus* is also available in Italian, Spanish, French, German, Greek, Polish and Hungarian.



Caesar Miniatures soft plastic Hebrew Warrior figures. Note that about half the miniatures come with empty hands to fit the weapons supplied separately in a tiny packet inside the main bag of figures. As the Editor found, a certain degree of patience is required. You'll also notice the curious selection of figures at the rear, including a female warrior with cloak and a chap hurling a rock – useful for ancient siege games. With a head swap, you could re-stage the death of Abimelech!

BASING THE FIGURES

Obviously, this depends on the rules, but actually, if you use the bigger *Impetus* bases, they look far more spectacular than *DBA* bases. If both armies are based for *Basic Impetus*, you can play *DBA* with them. But because they're bigger, suddenly they look more like armies.

The whole visual effect is something that I feel it is worth considering. You might decide to buy 6mm figures for this campaign, which will certainly make storage easier, but then contemplate basing the figures on the larger 60mm frontage bases that *DBA* advise when using 28mm figures. I've seen Baccus figures based in this fashion and they too look spectacular. Armies start looking like armies.

THE MAP

This is quite simple.

- Take a pack of standard playing cards. First, remove court cards and jokers, then shuffle well and place one card face up on the table in front of you. This represents the city of Shechem. Because the higher the value, the better, if the card you've placed is less than a 7, you can discard and draw again, until you've at least got a 7.
- Around this card place eight others, also face up, so they form a square, three cards by three cards, with Shechem in the middle. These represent the neighbouring towns, villages and cities.
- Finally, shuffle in half the court cards and place the cards, face up, until Shechem is in the centre of a five by five square of cards.
- You can move from one card to another by crossing an edge, but not by moving diagonally. The terrain is assumed to get in the way.
- At this point you can, if you want, transfer your grid of twenty five settlements to a more aesthetically pleasing map, with hills and roads and all the fripperies of geography. You can even give them names (Bibles tend to be full of names). Just make sure the roads connect the settlements, so that your movement follows the rules about not moving along diagonals.

THE CARDS

Each card is a settlement. The value of the card gives you the strength and wealth of the settlement. All settlements are

walled after a fashion. Those that are represented by court cards consider themselves cities and these have a notional strength of 12. With other cards, the strength is the number on the card. All the cities on the left hand edge of your map (the western edge) are ports on the Mediterranean. Those cities on the right-hand edge of your map are cities in the Jordan Valley or to the east of it. If you don't have a city to the east or west, you might want to either shift one from north or south, or replace one of the larger settlements with a city.

THE NATURE OF THE SETTLEMENTS

You want to know how loyal or otherwise your cities and generals will be. Here, I'm going to suggest you look at the book *Tony Bath's Ancient Wargaming*, available from the History of Wargaming Project at <http://www.wargaming.co/books/bath/homepage.htm>. It includes Tony Bath's *Setting up a Wargames Campaign*, a must-read for the discerning ancient wargamer. He had an excellent system for dicing up the characteristics of your various governors and similar. I'd recommend you buy the book, but here is a simplified method of discovering the character of these people and places.

- We will assume that the loyalty of the city is in proportion to the popularity of the governor you appoint.
- Each city comes with a governor whom you can just accept, or you can replace them with your man. If you replace them, the city loyalty suffers a -1 penalty.
- If your governor leaves the city (perhaps because he leads troops to join your army), then the city loyalty defaults to the popularity of the local man. Obviously, you can have the local man executed, but then the city loyalty is at -3 to your governor's loyalty.
- If you garrison a city with a unit/base of your Reckless Adventurers, it adds +3 to the governor's loyalty.
- So roll a d6 for each characteristic for each city's governor/local strongman and consult the table at the foot of the page.

TRADE LINKS

If you have a port on the west side of the map, and a city on the east side in the Jordan valley, there will be a trade route between them. Mark the shortest road that connects them on your map. If you control every settlement on that trade route, you get a tax of 1 talent per settlement on the route per turn.

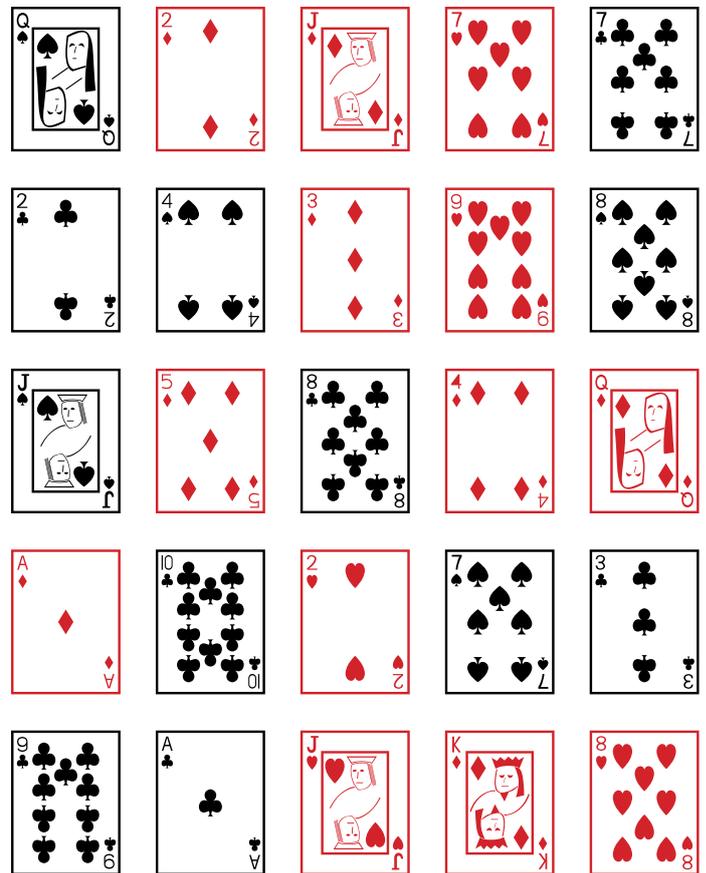
RAISING MONEY

- Each city pays you tribute: one talent for every point of value of the card drawn for the city. So if the city was represented by a 6 of diamonds, it pays you six Talents a turn.
- There is also the income from trade (see above).

RAISING TROOPS

Because *Basic Impetus* deploys troops in units (each of one base) and *DBA* deploys them in bases, I will use the phrase 'units/bases' or occasionally 'bases/units' to describe the building blocks of your army.

- Each city can field as many units/bases of troops as it has points. So the city with the 6 of diamonds can raise six units/bases of troops. Once they accept your rule, you can demand they send troops.
- The first unit/base they send is always warriors, the second is of skirmishers (with sling or bow), the third and fourth is of warriors, and the fifth can be skirmishers with sling or bow. After the fifth, you always get two more warriors before you get a skirmisher unit/base.



In this example 'map', Schechem is represented by the 8 of Clubs in the centre. On the left (western) edge, there are two major cities/ports on the Mediterranean flank; on the right (eastern) edge, there is only one major conurbation in the Jordan Valley, whilst the other court cards represent additional cities to the north and south. Quite a few court cards came up in this instance, so not only are there obvious east-west trade routes, but plenty of opportunities for a lively campaign!

SPENDING MONEY

- The first call on your income is your own standard of living. There's no point being Tyrant if it means you live in a ditch and drink dirty water and eat stale bread. So the first two Talents of your income are spent on your personal standard of living. There is no penny pinching here. Your wives and concubines demand that certain standards be maintained.
- The second call on your income is the honoraria paid to any governors or generals you appoint. If you allow the city to keep its original strongman/governor, then he has his own sources of income and you don't need to worry about him. But if you appoint one of your men as governor, you have to pay a Talent a turn to support him. (As well as rolling dice to give him characteristics.)
- Then you have your Reckless Adventurers. They aren't doing this for the good of their health. It costs 6 Talents to support one unit/base of Reckless Adventurers.
- You start off with one unit/base of Reckless Adventurers already raised, but it costs 18 Talents to raise a second. The extra units also cost 6 Talents to support. You see why I suggested you ensure that Shechem is at least a 7 strong settlement!
- You can support your troops. Whilst your army is on the march, it feeds itself, but when it sits down to besiege a settlement, it costs half the value of the city per turn (rounded up) to support the besieging army. Sieges are resolved at the end of the turn, even if the army has been encamped around it for the entire turn.

Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6
GENERAL DISPOSITION	Savage	Grim	Dour	Cheerful	Happy	Recklessly friendly
MORALS	Utterly depraved	Debauched	Drink & women	Drink or women	Highly moral	Goodie two shoes
MARTIAL APTITUDE	None					Genius
MARTIAL EXPERIENCE	None					Vast
ACTIVITY	Idle	Slow	Methodical	Busy	Shows initiative	Erratic
LOYALTY	Completely disloyal					Utterly loyal
POPULARITY	This is calculated by taking the average of the six characteristics above, but a loyalty of 1 or 2 counts as a 6 as the character is assumed to be good at dissembling.					

MOVEMENT AND FIGHTING

MOVEMENT

A turn has six movement phases. In a movement phase, you may move from one settlement to the next. A movement phase includes any battles. A siege lasts an entire turn.

You cannot move through a hostile city territory unless you are willing to offer battle.

FIGHTING

- When you turn up outside a city that isn't part of your petty empire, there is a chance they will join you. If the strength of the army you are fielding is twice that of the city, they will automatically join you if your popularity is higher than that of their local strongman/governor. If they do not join you automatically, they have to be besieged, or they can be deceived into fighting a battle outside the walls.
- If the defenders are not outnumbered, they will offer battle. Here, you can attempt to deceive them by splitting your force, and having part of it under a general. (Dice for that individual's characteristics, what you get is what you get. He's probably a brother in law or something.) You will commence the battle with you leading your force which is no stronger than the enemy, and the enemy attacking them. Your general will lead the outflanking force to the attack provided he makes certain die rolls.
- He must roll less than or equal to his Martial Aptitude or Experience (your choice) to attack in the correct place. Otherwise, he arrives behind you, as the battle starts.
- He must roll less than or equal to his Activity or he turns up 2d6 moves after you want him to.
- He must roll less than or equal to his Loyalty or he doesn't turn up at all. If his loyalty is a 1, on a roll of 6 he joins the other side.

SIEGES

At the end of each turn, roll less than or equal to your Martial Aptitude or Military Experience (your choice) to take the city. Each turn deduct an extra -1 from the dice; it gets easier as time goes on.

ARMY SIZE

The largest army size that you can field is twelve units/bases.

Enemy armies are the size that their settlement can raise. Settlements do not join forces with one exception. A settlement next to a city (a city is a settlement with strength 12) can get an allied contingent from that city. Effectively, they'd rather pay

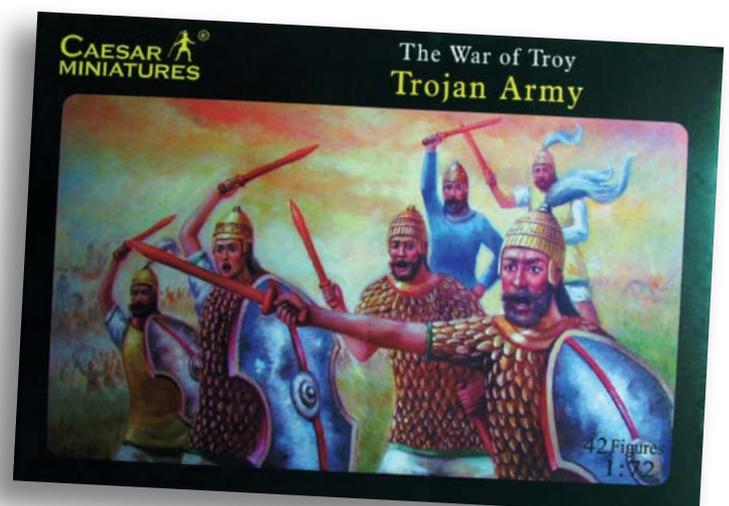
tribute to them rather than you. This will give them a field army of twelve units/bases.

WINNING AND LOSING BATTLES

- If you defeat the forces of a settlement that fight you outside the walls, then the settlement surrenders to you and pays tribute.
- If you lose a battle, this will call into question the loyalty of all your other settlements and generals who must immediately take a loyalty test.
- Each governor or general must roll less than or equal to their Loyalty to stay loyal to you.
- Each city, or army being led by a general, must then roll less than or equal to the governor or general's Popularity to remain loyal to him.
- This means that you could get a situation where a governor is loyal to you, but the city rebels against both you and him. In this case, he can hold the gate with his bodyguard for 1d6 turns, meaning you can rush there with an army and force the citizens to fight you in the field, however strong you are.
- If a governor or general rebels, but his city or army doesn't, he flees and you have to roll up a new governor or general.

REPLACING LOSSES

- Units lost will be replaced by the city next time you ask them to. However, for each unit lost, the city will suffer -1 to its loyalty for the next four turns. Remember, most losses aren't dead, they're wounded, fled or whatever.
- If you lose a unit of 'Reckless Adventurers', you have to raise a new one at full cost. This is because everyone (including



probably your own army) takes delight in sticking the knife into your trained thugs when they get the chance.

TROOP TYPES AND ARMY LISTS

If you're using *DBA*, then your warriors are Auxilia (Ax), your Skirmishers Psiloi (Ps) and I'd suggest your Reckless Adventurers are Warband (Wb).

For *Basic Impetus* the troop types are:

Nr	Type	M	VBU	I	VD	Notes
Reckless Adventurers	FL	8	4	3	3	Impetuous
Warriors	FL	8	4	1	2	Javelin
Skirmishers	S	8	2	0	1	Short Bow B
Or	S	8	2	0	1	Sling

Basic Impetus legend: CGP= Heavy Chariots; CGL= Light Chariots; CF= Scythed Chariots; CP= Heavy Cavalry; CM= Medium Cavalry; CL= Light Cavalry; FP= Heavy Infantry; FL= Light Infantry; S= Skirmishers; T= Missile Troops, EL= Elephants; ART= Artillery; M= Movement; VBU= Basic Unit Value; I= Impetus Bonus, VD= Demoralization Value; VDT= Total Demoralization Value

MORE FIGURES

Obviously you're a wargamer so you need an excuse for buying more figures. Well for your Reckless Adventurers, to make them a bit more splendid and to make them stand out, have a look at the Caesar Set H019 Trojan Army (see opposite and below). Far more splendid, more armour than justified and helmets too glamorous for words, but your bold lads will stand out nicely. I'd give them round shields, (drawing pins have served as round shields for plastic figures since the first Airfix Romans were converted to Hoplites so they'll doubtless work for you.) and perhaps get rid of some of the more extravagant flourishes on the helmets.

For the Cities, obviously you can just use the same figures as you are using for your Hebrew/Canaanite forces but you might fancy something extra. The Caesar Set H046 Philistine Warriors would do nicely for a coastal city, or if you prefer, use Egyptians

as the rulers of a decaying outpost of empire. For the cities on the Jordan, again you might want to contemplate something more 'Arab', perhaps Caesar, Set H023, Arab Camel Riders and Bedouin. Note these are purely suggestions; keep your eyes open on the 'bring and buys', see who's selling what off cheap, and have fun.

WINNING AND LOSING.

Technically, you could keep going until you conquer every settlement. What tends to happen is that you lose a battle, in which case everyone tests for loyalty and half your empire collapses, meaning you have to re-conquer it; or you are killed in battle.

If the latter happens, there are two options. The first is that it is game over – you've died before conquering the entire map. The other option is to say that the reason you cannot just dispose of your more irritating generals is that they are family and potential heirs. So, on your death, you immediately become your most popular general. This might mean you have with you the remnants of the defeated army, or if your loyalty was suspect you might be stuck in an out-of-the-way settlement and have to raise an army and defeat some other general first.

ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS

Obviously, this system can be used in other settings. It would probably work with minimal tweaking for, for example, a Greek trying to build a tyranny for himself in Sicily, with one of the cities on the edge of the map being Syracuse.

Another fun setting would be 1st century BC Syria, where you're trying to rebuild the Seleucid Empire, or at least bicker convincingly for the dregs, and the cities on the edge represent Arab tribal chieftains, debauched Ptolemaic kinsmen and even allies of Rome.

With a liberal interpretation of some of the concepts, it would probably work in Medieval Italy or Germany, and frankly it might even act as a skeleton for street gangs in the modern or futuristic city of your choice.



The contents of the Editor's box of Trojans. No punches pulled here – those spears are wonky! Perhaps this was a 'Friday afternoon' pack, because he also found many of the figure bases to be badly distorted, so there was no way they would stand up on their own, though the more patient might persevere with hot water or a hairdryer to fix the problem. Overall, however, the figures are nicely sculpted and well proportioned. Weapons and shields come on the small sprues.