Opinion
Guest Voices



The archaeological site of Tell es-Sultan in the West Bank uncovers the remains of the ancient city of Jericho. (Wikimedia Commons/Bukvoed)



by John Dear

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I speak with professor Kate Common on the nonviolent origins of the Hebrew community as described in a new book, *Undoing Conquest: Ancient Israel, the Bible, and the Future of Christianity* (Orbis). Common is assistant professor of public and practical theology at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and the theologian-in-residence at St. John's Episcopal Church in Northampton, Massachusetts.

"In the battle of Jericho, in the book of Joshua, Israel's army kills everyone — men, women, children and livestock. Suddenly, human violence — genocide — is condoned by God," Common said.

But decades of archeological evidence from the "highland settlements," Common reports, now prove definitively there was no genocide as Israel entered the promised land. Instead of conquest and genocide, the Hebrews originated from a peaceful, nonmilitaristic movement of Indigenous people who formed egalitarian communities living outside the reach of the Egyptian empire.

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"These people never had a conquest story until 500 years later in 722 B.C.E. when Israel was terrorized and conquered by the Assyrian Empire. Later, they wrote their origins story as a conquest of the promised land, portraying themselves like the brutal, genocidal Assyrians."

That false narrative has been used to justify violence, war and genocide ever since, Common said.

White European colonists who killed millions of Indigenous people and enslaved millions of Africans invoked this image, as did the white racists who created South Africa’s apartheid, and the Israeli warmakers and Christian Zionists who justify the recent genocide in Gaza.

Jesus, Common said, is calling us back to the Hebrew ideals that renounced empire and created egalitarian communities of peace.

Listen to the full episode here.

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.