

HIGHLIGHTS OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BIBLE LANDS

by

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CHAPTER TEN

UNCOVERING PALESTINIAN OLD TESTAMENT MOUNDS

JERICHO THE CITY CAPTURED BY JOSHUA

EARLY EXCAVATIONS AT JERICHO

An expedition to Jericho was organized in 1907 under the direction of Professor Sellin, of Vienna. Watzinger joined Sellin in 1908 and 1909. The mound of Canaanite Jericho rose 40 feet above the plain and contained 7 acres of ground. The excavators found that the wall of the city had been double, the outer one being about 5 feet thick, and the inner one 10 feet thick. These walls were made of sun-dried mud-brick. They had laid crossbeams of timber over the space between the two walls, and upon these ordinary houses had been built, such as Rahab's dwelling. Ancient Jericho was certainly a well-fortified city. Sellin and Watzinger found proof that Jericho was destroyed by burning at one time, as the Bible says it was. They also found in the eastern part of the city foundations of a large building which was believed to be the fortress that was rebuilt by Hiel, of Bethel, when he defied the curse pronounced by Joshua on any man who would dare to rebuild the city. 1

Garstang's excavations and the date of the fall of Jericho. In the years 1929-1933 there was another expedition to Jericho, organized by Sir Charles Marston and directed by Professor John Garstang. They found underneath the city destroyed by Joshua three cities much more ancient, the oldest dating back to 2500-2100 B.C. During the period from 2100-1900 B.C. a tower had been constructed in the city and the territory was enlarged to take in twelve acres. 2

Bible students have generally set the date for the fall of Jericho at approximately 1400 B.C. according to information afforded by the Scriptures. But certain Bible critics have endeavored to make the date up to two hundred years later. But Professor Garstang found a definite break of several hundred years in the pottery and other deposits, which pointed definitely to the date of 1400 B.C. for the city's destruction. In 1930 Garstang examined sixty thousand pieces of pottery or clay stones that came from the burned city of Jericho. The next year he examined forty thousand more fragments. All of these indicated the date of 1400 B.C. for the fall of the city.

Furthermore the excavators discovered the Jericho cemetery, and here fifteen hundred pottery vessels pointed to the same date, as did also scarab seals that were inscribed with the cartouche of the Pharaoh who reigned at that time. 3

Concerning the walls of Jericho. Garstang's discovery concerning the actual walls of Jericho is most interesting. What was seen remaining of the ruins was an indication of what had happened. The remains of the outer wall had fallen down the slope. The inner wall, for the most part, together with buildings upon it, fell into the space between the walls. Thus the Bible account is corroborated, for the walls fell outward so thoroughly that the Israelites could climb up over the ruins and enter the city. 4

Garstang suggests the possibility that an earthquake caused the walls to fall. He says:

One conclusion indeed seems certain: the power that could dislodge hundreds of tons of masonry in the way described must have been superhuman. Earthquake is the one and only known agent capable of the demonstration of force indicated by the observed facts; and there is reason to believe that in this lies the real answer to our question.

Not only does Jericho lie in a volcanic zone which is never wholly free from earthquake shocks, but the evidence of the site itself, as revealed by our excavations, points incontestably to this solution. 5

Evidence that the city of Jericho was burned. In ruins of buildings found in the city were various kinds of foodstuffs that were charred, and dishes and pots that were blackened and cracked by fire. One jar was partly full of wheat. On a brick ledge in the corner of one room were some dates, barley, oats, olives and an onion. There was also a small quantity of bread and some unbaked dough. The reason the Israelites had not eaten or taken this foodstuff is because God had commanded them to make the spoil of the city a burnt offering to the Lord. And Scripture says, **"They burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein"** (Joshua 6:24). Garstang declares that the burning of the city was no ordinary burning. Everything points to intense heat and that the city had been "devoted as a holocaust." 6

KIRJATH-SEPHER, THE STRONGHOLD CONQUERED BY OTHNIEL

Search for a library. In the years 1926-1932 the mound of *Tell Beit Mirsim* was excavated by a joint expedition of the Xenia Theological Seminary and the American School of Oriental Research at Jerusalem, with Dr. Melvin Grove Kyle as director, assisted by Dr. W. F. Albright.

The early name of the city was *Kirjath-sepher*, which means "City of Books." The excavators hoped they would find a royal library there, but were disappointed in this search. There never was any question, however, about the identity of the site of this old city. One indication of interest to Bible students is the presence of an upper well and a lower well near the site. These wells are located in territory called "upper" and "lower." Grooves worn in the remains of the old well curbs show use from ancient times. This corresponds with the "upper springs" and the "nether springs" which Caleb's daughter asked of her father as a wedding present. 7

Walls of the city. In about the time of Abraham, the first walls of the city were constructed around the top of the hill on which the city was built. Dr. Kyle discovered these walls to have been 30 feet high and 10 to 14 feet thick. They were built of large uncut stone. Around 1800 B.C. the city was captured and the gates burned. After this the walls were rebuilt and strengthened. 8

Against the perpendicular wall they cast a great sloping heap of soil and clay beaten down, extending out about fifteen feet from the bottom of the wall, and sloping up by a convex surface to a point on the wall about twenty feet high. This clay wall thus heaped against the stone wall they now covered with a strong, big stone Canaanite revetment wall . . . Then to this revetment was added at very frequent intervals, towers, and bastions, and buttresses. 9

This was indeed a magnificent wall. If the spies who entered Canaan saw such walls as these, it is no wonder they said the cities were “**walled up to heaven**” (Deuteronomy 1:28). To capture such a city would certainly be a tremendous task. It was Caleb who offered his daughter in marriage to the man who would lead the assault on this walled city, and it was Othniel who did so and won the prize (Joshua 15:16, 17; Judges 1:12, 13).

A quantity of slingstones was found around the outside of the old wall, no doubt having been used in all sieges of the city, including the one when Othniel captured it. Slingstones found by excavators in Palestine were made, for the most part, of flint 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Much time must have been spent by their manufacturers in making them to be round in shape.10

Evidence of city's occupation by Israel. Dr. Kyle found plenty of evidence that the city had been captured by the Israelites. This evidence was found in the debris located inside the walls, in the high places, and ancient shrines that the Israelites must have thrown down, and at the eastern gateway. Also there was a clear demarcation between the old city of the Canaanites and the city of the conquering Israelites. There was discovered a thick stratum of ashes, and it was clearly to be seen (and the pottery finds indicated it also) that what was below that level was Canaanite, and what was above that level was Israelite. The Israelites evidently burned the gates of the city, threw down the high places; after completely conquering the city they rebuilt it. They then lived in the city until the time when King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it, along with other cities of Judah at the time Jerusalem was captured. 11

The excavators found clear evidence of immediate occupation of the city after its conquest. There was no period of decay or neglect. There was no neutral stratum lying between the old Canaanite city and the Israelite city. The city of Othniel rested immediately on the ashes of the city the Israelites destroyed. This is exactly as the Bible records what happened in the days of the conquest. 12

City's water supply. Both the Canaanites and the Israelites showed a knowledge of engineering in the maintenance of underground defenses. They had a secret passageway to make sure they had a supply of water in case of siege. Two large cisterns were found. In connection with one of these was a settling basin, and the water from the house roofs ran into this before going into the cistern. The other one also had a system for keeping sediment from entering the cistern. 13

Discovery of jar-handle seal. In the year 1928 Dr. Albright discovered at this mound a broken jar-handle which had been stamped with a beautiful seal inscribed with the words, "Belonging to Eliakim, steward of Yaukin." The name "Yaukin" is an abbreviated form of "Jehoiachin." Two years later two additional copies of this same stamp were discovered on jar-handles, one by Elihu Grant in excavations at Beth-shemesh, and the other one by excavators at Kirjath-sepher. These seals indicate that Eliakim was steward of the property of King Jehoiachin while the king was captive in Babylon. During the years that Zedekiah was king, many of the people of Judah doubtless thought that Jehoiachin was the rightful king and his property was not forfeited. 14

A door of Abrahamic times. In the stratum of the Israelitish occupation of the city, there were found a few door sockets, but they were very small, indicating that the house doors of that time were weak. But one very large door socket was found in the Canaanite section of the mound, and it was in its place in a heavy wall. Dr. Kyle called the house where this door socket was found an "Abrahamic house." By this he meant that it was the kind of house and door that existed in Canaan when Abraham and Lot lived there. This Canaanite door was a sample of a door strong enough to resist the might of a mob such as tried to break into Lot's house in Sodom at the time the angel messengers visited him (Genesis 19:9, 10). 15

Degraded Canaanite religion. One of the interesting finds at Kirjath-sepher was a household stele representing a Canaanite serpent goddess. It was a sculptured likeness of a snake coiled around the goddess. It was the people who had such a loathsome serpent worship, together with other degrading immoral practices, that Israel's God told the Israelites to exterminate from the land. We can now begin to appreciate why such a command was given. 16

Industrial life of the city. In the Hebrew section of the mound was discovered a large textile mill, using the factory system in olden times. Along with this factory, there must have been many individual workshops in the houses because so many loom-weights were found in them. Also two large stone vats had been used by the Jews as a factory system of dye works, there being bluish dye still showing color. This dye-house had a water supply available. Before this discovery, it had been generally believed that no dyeing industry existed among the Israelites, and that they looked to the Tyrians and Phoenicians for their dyeing. This discovery was therefore a revelation to many. 17

Other finds. Dr. Kyle found so many carved and decorated "vanity cases" in the mound, that it would seem as if every Jewess in the old city had had one. The instruments contained in them were used to darken the eyelids and tattoo the face, etc. One is reminded of the prophetic message of Isaiah against the women of his day for their excesses along this line (Isaiah 3:17-24). Weights were found that had been used for scales in weighing. Also there were stone rollers which had been used in rolling the flat oriental roofs of the houses. 18

SHILOH, THE CITY OF ISRAEL'S EARLIEST SANCTUARY IN CANAAN

History of the city. In the early part of I Samuel, we find the Ark of the Covenant being kept in a sanctuary at Shiloh under the charge of Eli the priest.

The Ark was captured and kept by the Philistines for a while; when it was returned it was not taken to Shiloh, but was rather kept for some years at Kirjath-jearim and later brought by King David to Jerusalem. The family of Eli was afterward found at Nob, but never at Shiloh. In the meanwhile what had happened to the city of Shiloh? The prophet Jeremiah indicated that Shiloh had been destroyed because of God's judgment against it (see Jeremiah 7:12, 14; 26:6, 9). It seems most likely, then, that the Philistines destroyed the city in their warfare with Israel.

Scripture accuracy proved. The Wellhausen school of Bible critics questioned the historicity of the Bible account of the city of Shiloh, but the excavators have proved the Scriptures to be correct. In the years 1926 and 1928 a Danish expedition labored at Shiloh; they established by the evidence of the pottery finds that the city had been inhabited from the 13th to the 11th century B.C, but had been uninhabited from about 1050 to 300 B.C. When this break in the city came is exactly the time when the Philistines must have captured the city. Thus the finds of the excavators fit into the Biblical account perfectly, showing that we can depend upon the historical accuracy of the Word of God. 19

BETH-SHEMESH, THE CITY RECEIVING THE ARK FROM THE PHILISTINES

Excavations by Mackenzie. Ain Shems, the site of the Beth-shemesh in Scripture, was excavated by the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1911 and 1912 under the direction of Dr. Duncan Mackenzie.

A section of the early city was found to have pottery in imitation of the kind found on the Island of Crete. Doubtless this indicates it was the period of occupation by the Philistines, because those people are believed to have come from Crete. This early city was destroyed by a siege which ended in a great fire and left many ashes. Dr. Mackenzie believed this was the time of the capture of the city by the Israelites. To correspond with this idea, the excavators found Israelitish pottery in the strata located above the ashes. The city gate which Mackenzie uncovered at Beth-shemesh had rooms on each side of the passageway going through the tower. 20

Excavation by Grant. In the year 1928 Professor Elihu Grant, of Haverford College, continued the work begun by Mackenzie at Beth-shemesh. He uncovered a temple, but his most important find was a potsherd discovered in 1930, containing an archaic form of alphabetic Hebrew script. This is another valuable link in the tracing of the origin of the alphabet in Sinai, Syria and Palestine. 21

GERAR, THE PHILISTINE GRAIN CENTER

Pottery finds indicate city a grain center. It was in 1927 that the archaeologist Petrie, who had excavated so successfully in Egypt, decided to turn his attention to Palestine. He began to excavate the mound of *Tell Jemmeh*, eight miles south of Gaza, which marks the site of the old capital city of King Abimelech, the Philistine, who had dealings with both Abraham and Isaac. Both of these patriarchs went there in time of famine (see Genesis 20 and 26). Petrie discovered ancient pottery that showed Gerar was a great grain center. 22

Discovery of Philistine furnace. A sword-furnace of the Philistines was also found. Here all sorts of iron instruments and weapons were no doubt sharpened. The furnace was a receptacle containing a flue, and it gave evidence of great heat. It must have been to such a forge that the Israelites in the days of Saul brought their iron implements to be sharpened. (See I Samuel 13:19-21). 23

BETHSHAN, A CITY OF CANAAN NOT TAKEN BY JOSHUA

The history of the city. The city of Beisan was in Old Testament times called Bethshan or Bethshean. In New Testament days it was a city of the Decapolis and was named Scythopolis. It was not conquered by Israel at the time of the conquest of Canaan. When King Saul lost his life in the battle with the Philistines, his mutilated body was fastened to the wall of Bethshan and his armor placed in the house of Ashtaroth. The city was probably captured by King David, as the excavators found evidence of its destruction at that time. 24

The city is mentioned as contributing to the table of King Solomon (I Kings 4:7, 12). Being located where the Valley of Jezreel goes down to the Jordan Valley, it was a strategic center because it guarded the main gateway to the land beyond the Jordan River. During its long history from the fourth millennium B.C. to the time of the Crusaders, Bethshan was inhabited by the following peoples: Amorites, Hittites, Egyptians, Philistines, Hebrews, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Crusaders. 25

Excavators find two pillars of Egyptian kings. The excavation of the mound of Bethshan, which began in 1921, was a project of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, with Dr. Clarence Fisher as director of the expedition. During the work of the second season there were two pillars found in connection with what had been an Egyptian fortress. One of these was the Stele of Seti (1313-1292 B.C.) and the other was the Stele of Rameses II (1292-1225 B.C.), Egyptian kings. These two pillars bore inscriptions of a historical nature which glorified these rulers of Egypt. 26

One of these steles (that of Seti I) mentions the *Apiru* people as being in the mountainous land. 27

We have already seen in the *Tell el-Amarna Letters* that *Apiru* is another form for *Hebrew*. If this, then, is a reference to the Hebrew people, it is an indication that they were settled in the land of Canaan in the reign of Seti I. The question arises then, why does not the Old Testament make mention of the Egyptians as one of the enemies of the Israelites after they were in the land? The answer to this question is simply that these two kings did enter the land and had a stronghold at Bethshan, but they did not touch the Israelites because they were, for the most part, in the mountainous sections of Judah and Samaria, and the Egyptians were not accustomed to the tactics of mountain warfare. 28

Discovery of heathen temples. Altogether the excavators discovered four heathen temples at Bethshan. What has been called the southern temple is believed to be the Temple of Dagon referred to in I Chronicles 10:10 and the so-called northern temple may be the one mentioned in I Samuel 31:10 as being the House of Ashtaroth. 29

GIBEAH, THE FORTRESS CITY OF KING SAUL

Identity of the site. In the years 1922-1923 Dr. W. F. Albright excavated the mound of *Tell el-Ful*, located three miles north of the Damascus Gate, for the American School of Oriental Research. The identity of this site with the Gibeah of King Saul has now been definitely settled.

The site fits in with the events of the Bible story, and the excavations prove that the mound was occupied exactly as indicated by the account contained in the Scriptures. Practically all cities founded by the Canaanites were built near a spring or stream of water, such as Jerusalem, Gibeon, Kirjath-jearim, etc. The Hebrews, on the other hand, when they settled in Canaan, built in the hill country, and often established cities where there was no running water. Bethel and Gibeah were examples of this. Cisterns were depended upon for water supply. This was exactly the situation the excavators discovered at Tell el-Ful. 30

Judges 19, 20 confirmed. The first period of the occupation of the city was in the days of the Judges; it had a fortress, which was burned at the very time when the Book of Judges says the city was burned during the civil war. This confirmation of the Scriptures by what the excavators discovered at Tell el-Ful is of great interest to Bible-believing Christians, because the historicity of the Biblical account has been so often questioned by the critics. These men have maintained that these two chapters of the Bible were a forgery of the post-Exilic period. Such an accusation can no longer be made in view of the facts that have come to light at this mound. 31

Gibeah in the days of King Saul. During all those years when King Saul was engaging in wars with the Philistines, the city of Gibeah served as his headquarters, and by means of its watch tower he was able to follow military operations at a distance. Probably it was also the place of his residence. The excavators could plainly see that this fortress of Saul was used by a person of great importance. The outer wall of defense varied from 6 ½ to 1 ½ feet in width. The fortress showed signs of solid masonry and rustic wealth. 32

Gibeah in later Jewish history. The remains of the later fortress found at the mound, that which corresponds to the Gibeah of later Jewish history, shows that it acted as a military outpost designed to protect the city of Jerusalem from surprise attacks of an enemy. 33

GEZER, THE CITY CONQUERED BY PHARAOH AND GIVEN TO SOLOMON

Time and character of expedition. Gezer was a Canaanite city that the Israelites failed to conquer in the days of Joshua (cf. Judges 1:29). It was Pharaoh who finally conquered it and gave it as a present to his daughter, Solomon's wife (see I Kings 9:15-17).

The excavation of Gezer was a project of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and R. A. Stewart Macalister was in charge of the expedition, which ran from 1902 to 1909. *Tell el-Jazar*, the mound excavated, is located six miles southeast of Ramleh, and it had already been identified by Clermont-Ganneau as the site of the old city of Gezer.

The excavators discovered that the city had been occupied from about 3000 B.C. through the Maccabean period. 34

Character of the city in pre-Israel period. There were several walls that had encircled the city at different times in its history. First, a brick wall was built to fortify the city, and later on, a stone wall that was 13 feet thick was constructed. When this was destroyed, its materials were used in the making of an outer wall 14 feet thick which enclosed an area of 27 acres. This last wall was built by the Egyptians during the period of Egyptian domination over Canaan that began with Thothmes III and lasted about a hundred years. This great wall continued to be the city's defense clear down to the days of the Babylonian Exile. 35

The tower at the northern gate of this wall protruded and thus the entrance was from the side; those entering would therefore make a right-angled turn. The gate's passageway was 40 feet wide. In the pre-Hebrew occupation period of Gezer, Macalister found a building which might have been a Philistine temple. In the middle of a large hall, some stones were discovered that gave some evidence of having supported wooden pillars, and these held up the roof. This structure appeared to be similar to the one which Samson was able to pull down at Gaza (Judges 16:23-30). When the room of the building was too wide for a single roof beam to span it, two beams were used, and the ends were then supported by a wooden column under which a flat stone was placed for support. Thus Samson moved the columns from the footstones and brought down the building. 36

Discovery of water tunnel. About 2000 B.C. the inhabitants of Gezer cut an underground tunnel in order to reach the water of a spring to give the city a water supply during a siege. The tunnel was cut through solid rock, and it was entered by using many rock-cut steps. The passageway was 130 feet long and terminated in the cave where the spring was located. The cave floor was over 94 feet below the rock level of the city's surface. The project was a remarkable piece of engineering. The tunnel was not used during the time of the Israelite occupation. 37

Indications of Israelite occupation of the city. Macalister found that at the time the Israelites came in possession of the city there had been an increase in the city's population. The evidence of an increased population consisted in the crowding together of the city's houses to make room for new ones that were built. The excavators discovered that at a later date than the building of the outer walls, towers had been placed in the wall at various places. Macalister was of the opinion that these towers could have been the work of King Solomon when he fortified the city (see I Kings 9:15-19). 38

MEGIDDO AND EZION-GEGER, IMPORTANT CITIES OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM

Concerning the greatness of Solomon's kingdom.

"And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life" (I Kings 4:21).

But at one time Bible critics were saying that Solomon was really an insignificant ruler.

They said that the Scripture statement about Solomon's kingdom was historically unreasonable, on account of the power and dominion of the Assyrian Empire to the East, and Egypt in the South. But archaeology has uncovered many records of ancient times that give us hitherto unknown historical information outside the Bible. And it has been revealed that during the time that David's and Solomon's kingdoms were rising to power, the Assyrian and Egyptian kingdoms had weak rulers on the throne. Thus the decline in the power of these kings helped to give to David and Solomon a greater opportunity to extend their kingdom over a wider area. 39

Concerning the wealth and wisdom of Solomon. There was a time when skeptical minds questioned the Bible accounts of Solomon's wealth and wisdom. But the results of two important archaeological expeditions in Palestine have helped to do away with these objections. One of these was the excavation of the Mound of Megiddo, and the other was the uncovering of the mound at Ezion-geber. The results of these two expeditions have corroborated Scripture in a remarkable way concerning the Jewish Golden Age of their history.

The expedition to uncover Megiddo. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago undertook the task of excavating Tell el-Mutesellim, or the Mound of Megiddo. This expedition ran from 1925 through 1939 and cost nearly one million dollars. The work was under the supervision of Dr. Breasted, but Fisher, Guy, and Loud each served as director. This mound stood 88 feet above the Plain of Esdraelon. The top of the mound covered an area of 13 ½ acres of ground. Layer by layer of debris was removed and the level of the Age of Solomon was reached. 40

The discovery of Solomon's horse stables. It was in 1928 that archaeologist P. L. O. Guy found in the southeastern corner of the mound what is now believed to be the remains of Solomon's stables for horses. There was space for 450 horses. The stalls were arranged in double rows. The horses were twelve in a row facing each other, with a passageway between for the grooms and the feeders. In front of each horse was a stone manger, and a massive stone hitching post with a hole for a halter-shank. Supports for the roof were to be seen. The floor of the stables, except where the animals stood, was paved with hydraulic lime plaster made of crushed unslaked lime. Where the horses stood, there was a cobbled-floor to prevent them from slipping. Dr. Albright says: "Horses were better cared for than human beings in those days." 41

Quarters for chariot detachment. In addition to the horse stables there was a great parade ground or courtyard. On a high spot a large building had been located. This was believed to have been the residence of the commander of the chariot detachment. There was also a row of rooms that doubtless served as the barracks for the troops. So here were located the stables for the horses, the barracks for the men, and the general headquarters for the chariot battalion. 42

Solomon's chariot cities. The Bible indicates that Solomon devoted whole cities to stable his horses and keep his chariots. First Kings 9:19 reads:

"And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion."

Megiddo was only one of Solomon's chariot cities where he had stables for his horses. Similar hitching posts have been discovered in other parts of Palestine. They were formerly thought to be pillars of heathen worship, but their similarity to the posts found at Megiddo give evidence of their having served as hitching posts for stables. 43

Length of time Megiddo stables were in use. It seems fairly certain now that these stables were built by King Solomon, and that they continued to be used by the kings of Israel after the invasion of Shishak and through the most part of the ninth century B.C. There are indications that extensive repairs were made on these stables. 44

The Megiddo water system. Excavator Guy discovered that in the pre-Israel period the city of Megiddo had developed a very clever underground water system. A vertical shaft went down through about 45 feet of debris and then through 35 feet of soft rock. Then it ran 35 feet at an angle to a flight of stairs. Then through a tunnel 165 feet long to reach a cave that had a supply of water. Stairs went around the vertical part and on the slope. Thus the women of that day could go to this underground supply of water and carry their pitchers back full of fresh, cool water. At a later time the water was brought to the foot of the vertical shaft by the extension of the tunnel. At one time the use of the water in this way was discontinued, and silt and debris filled up the water system. But in Solomon's time there are indications that the shaft and tunnel were cleared out, and the silt thus secured was used to make the great parade ground level for the horses and chariots. A masonry stairway was constructed for the system. It seems possible that this water system was still in use as late as the reign of King Josiah. Shortly after that time this remarkable water system fell into disuse. 45

Was the Bible right or wrong about copper and iron in Canaan? Concerning the land of Canaan Moses had said, "**A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass [i.e., copper]**" (Deuteronomy 8: 9).

Critics once said this Scripture was incorrect, because iron and copper had not up to that time been found in the land. Archaeologists now recognize that the Bible was absolutely correct, for deposits of both of these metals have been discovered in the land. The archaeologist, Dr. Nelson Glueck, was acquainted with these Scripture statements, and with the hope of discovering the presence of these metals, he decided to make a thorough examination of the whole length of Wadi Araba, which is the great rift running between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aquaba. He actually found ancient mining and smelting sites in various places, and fragments of pottery dated these to Solomon's time. 46

Finding Solomon's copper mines. In the year 1934 in connection with Dr. Glueck's survey of the southern section of the land of Israel, the archaeologist came upon one ruined site which his Arab guide named Khirbet Nahas, which translated from Arabic means, Copper Ruin. When this place was examined, it was learned that here was one of Solomon's copper mines, and that in connection with it the copper ores went through an initial smelting process. And pottery fragments dated this activity to the reign of King Solomon and afterward. 47

Excavation of Ezion-geber. The mound of Tell el-Kheleifeh, located at the northern end of the Gulf of Aquaba, halfway between its eastern and western sides, was the site of Solomon's ancient seaport, its former name being Ezion-geber. The excavation of this mound was under the direction of Dr. Nelson Glueck, extending from 1937 to 1940. When examination of the pottery at the site was made, it was recognized to be the same type as was discovered by Glueck at Khirbet Nahas and other sites in Wadi Araba. It was, therefore, agreed that the occupation of the site was mainly at the time of Solomon and immediately afterward. 48

Discovery of Solomon's copper refinery. The excavators began work at the northwest corner of the mound. They came upon a large building that gave evidence of being quite out of the ordinary. It proved to be King Solomon's copper refinery.

It was made of mud-bricks hardened by great heat. In the walls of the room were located two rows of flues which were connected with a system of air channels. The builders of this smelter had faced the furnace toward the prevailing wind coming from the northwest. These winds blew steadily through the flue holes and thus kept the fire in the furnace room burning without the use of bellows. Thus in those days the same principle was used as that of the Bessemer blast furnace of modern times. Evidently ores that had previously gone through an initial smelting process were here further refined into a purer metal. This old smelter of King Solomon's is the most elaborate one ever discovered by archaeologists. Dr. Glueck called Ezion-geber, "The Pittsburgh of Palestine." King Solomon was truly a great copper magnate. 49

SAMARIA, THE CITY OF AHAB'S IVORY PALACE

Excavations at Samaria. In 1908-1910 Harvard University sponsored an expedition to uncover the old city of Samaria. It was under the direction of D. G. Lyon, G. A. Reisner, and C. S. Fisher. In 1931-1933 further excavations were continued by Harvard University, together with the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, the Palestine Exploration Fund, the British Academy, and the British School of Archaeology at Jerusalem. J. W. Crowfoot was in charge. The three latter institutions did additional work in the year 1935. 50

It is now recognized that there are three periods of Israelite history represented in the excavated strata: the period of Kings Omri and Ahab, the period of King Jehu's time, and the period of the reign of King Jeroboam II. The ruins of a large building found at Samaria were believed to be the palace of King Omri because it was built on the native rock. A larger building built over the former building has been thought to be the palace of King Ahab, and a third building on a still higher level, the palace of King Jeroboam II.

It is interesting to notice that the archaeologists have not found anything older than the time of Omri at Samaria, thus confirming the Bible statement that King Omri founded the city (I Kings 16:22-24). 51

Fortifications of old Samaria. From the excavations we now know that the city of Samaria was remarkably well fortified in Old Testament times. In the days of Omri and Ahab the hill on which the city was built was leveled at the top and its sides banked, and then inner and outer walls were built around its summit.

At a later date additional walls were built on the terraces in the middle of the hill and also on the lower slopes. It is small wonder the city was able to hold out so long in the siege brought upon it by the Syrians as described in II Kings 6. And when the city was finally captured by the Assyrians, it underwent a siege lasting three years (II Kings 17:5). The excavators discovered that the city had been supplied with a number of good-sized cisterns which proved to be a great asset in times of siege. 52

Ahab's ivory palace. In the year 1932 a number of carved ivories were found in the vicinity of the mound that the excavators had assigned to the reigns of Omri and Ahab.

A vase fragment bearing the cartouche of the Egyptian king reigning at that time was discovered in association with one or two of these ivories. There were many ivories discovered that were intended to be plaques or else panels in relief attached to articles of furniture.

When the Bible refers to King Ahab's ivory palace (I Kings 22:39), some students have thought that the ivory was only a figure of speech, but we now have the proof that his palace itself had much ivory connected with it. The rooms were either paneled or decorated with ivory. The furnishings were often either made of ivory or inlaid with ivory.

Queen Jezebel would feel quite at home in an ivory palace, for the prophet Ezekiel in 27:1-15 indicates that quantities of ivory were imported from her native city of Tyre. 53

Ivory in the days of Jeroboam II. The prophet Amos declared a woe upon the people of Samaria "**who lie upon beds of ivory**" (Amos 6:4).

This was declared in the reign of Jeroboam, and some of the ivories found at Samaria no doubt date back to his reign. A bed of ivory has not been found at that mound, but that such beds were not uncommon in that day is seen by the fact that a real ivory bed was discovered in Arslan-Tash, North Syria. Its legs were solid ivory beautifully embossed. Part of another ivory bed was found at Carchemish in 1928 that had belonged to Hazael, of Damascus.

Amos predicted the destruction of the houses of ivory of his day (Amos 3:15), and this was literally fulfilled when the Assyrians destroyed Samaria in 722 B.C. It is fortunate for us that some of the many ivories of the cities escaped being destroyed and have been unearthed by the excavators as proof of the accuracy of the Bible. The archaeologists, Layard and Loftus, discovered some ivories in the palace of King Sargon at *Nimrud*, and it is even possible that they were part of the booty brought by that Assyrian king from the captured city of Samaria. 54

Other interesting discoveries at Samaria. At the northern end of one of the city's palace courtyards was found a water pool that had been cemented. Its dimensions are 33 feet by 17 feet.

Its location would indicate it was used for watering horses and, no doubt, washing chariots. It is quite possible that this is actually the "**Pool of Samaria**" where they washed the chariot of Ahab that had been stained with his blood (I Kings 22:38). 55

A number of ostraca, or potsherds, with writing on them were found by G. A. Reisner during the excavating of a floor level at Samaria. They are now dated corresponding to the reign of Jeroboam II. They are the record of oil and wine received by the king as his royal revenue. The names thereon are of special interest. Some of them are names that appear in the Bible. Certain of these men had the name of the heathen god Baal as a part of their name. Examples are, "Abi-baal" and "Merib-baal." Others had the name of the Lord as a part of their name. Examples of these are "Shemariah," which means in Hebrew, "*Kept of the Lord*"; and "Elisha," which means, "*God his salvation.*" 56

LACHISH, JUDAH'S FRONTIER FORTRESS CITY

Discovery of the site of Lachish. For many years archaeologists thought that Tell el-Hesi was the site of ancient Lachish. F. J. Bliss did considerable digging in that mound and published his findings in 1894 under the title, *A Mound of Many Cities*, believing that it was where Lachish once stood. But in 1929 W. F. Albright suggested to other archaeologists that he believed Tell ed-Duweir, which is situated in the foothills of Judah, was the true site of Lachish. Because of this suggestion, the Wellcome-Marston Research Expedition was organized and began excavations in this new site, with Dr. Starkey as director. The results proved that Dr. Albright was correct. 57

History of Lachish. The king of the Canaanite city of Lachish was conquered by Joshua (Joshua 10). The city was fortified by King Rehoboam (II Chronicles 11), and was always considered to be one of the very strongest fortresses of Judah. It was able to resist the siege of Sennacherib when that king was on his way to Egypt (II Kings 18; II Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36, 37). It was captured at last by King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 34:1-7). It was occupied in the days of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 11:30).

The Lachish ostraca and the times of Jeremiah. In 1935 Starkey discovered 18 letters written in Hebrew of Jeremiah's time. They were written with carbon ink on pieces of broken pottery. The best of these letters were written by a man named Hoshai (cf. Nehemiah 12:32; Jeremiah 42:1; 43:2), who must have been a military officer of subordinate rank, and stationed at an observation point near Lachish.

They were written to a man named Yaash, who was doubtless the commanding official at the fortress of Lachish. They were found on the floor of the guard room. The letters indicate a very much-disturbed and exciting condition of affairs just before the last destruction of the city by the Babylonians. 58

A part of Letter IV reads as follows:

We are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah. 59

The information on this ostraca fits right in with Jeremiah 34:7: "**When the King of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.**"

The fire signals of Azekah evidently had ceased, and only those of Lachish were continuing. It is clear that this must have been written very shortly before the fall of Lachish. The prophet Jeremiah had already referred to communication by fire signals in Jeremiah 6:1, “**Set up a sign of fire in Beth-hac-cer-em.**”

In Letter VI an official who was writing to the commanding officer at Lachish tells about circular letters which were being sent by the royal officials and notables, and this official accused the writers of the letters of “weakening the hands” of the people. Strangely enough, it was these same men about whom the official complained in his letter, who accused Jeremiah the prophet of “weakening the hands” of the men of war (Jeremiah 38:

Dr. Albright sums up the value of these Lachish letters in this way:

In these letters we find ourselves in exactly the age of Jeremiah, with social and political conditions agreeing perfectly with the picture drawn in the book that bears his name. 61

Two interesting seals. Two seals were discovered by the excavators at Lachish which are of interest to Bible students.

One was a stone seal having on it the name Shebna, apparently coming from the age of King Hezekiah. Quite possibly this is the Shebna who was scribe (equivalent to our Secretary of State) mentioned in Isaiah 36:3.

A clay seal was also found inscribed with the words, “The property of Gedaliah who is over the house.” This title, “over the house,” is equivalent to the British office of “Lord Chamberlain,” an office held by Eliakim in Isaiah 36:3, and previously held by Shebna in Isaiah 22:15.

Gedaliah was the governor whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed, who was murdered by Ishmael (Jeremiah 4:2). This clay seal might well have been the seal of this very Gedaliah. 62

The Lachish ewer and the alphabet. In 1934 Starkey found the Lachish ewer which had upon it an archaic form of alphabetic Hebrew script. It forms a valuable connecting link in the tracing of the origin of the alphabet in the Sinai Peninsula, Syria, and Palestine. 63 (See chapter 7)

EXPEDITIONS WHERE IDENTITY OF SITES IS UNCERTAIN

Et Tell and the city of Ai. In the years 1935 and 1936 a French expedition excavated the mound of Et Tell which was believed to be the site of the old city of Ai. They found that the town had not been occupied from around 2000 B.C. to 1200 B.C. This presents a problem for students of the Scriptures, for the Bible declares that the city was occupied by an enemy that Israel conquered at the time of the conquest of Canaan. Various kinds of solutions have been suggested, but it is important to remember that all the archaeologists are not convinced that this is actually the site of old Ai. Skeptical students are quick to charge the Bible with inaccuracy, but the wise thing to do is to wait for more evidence before coming to a conclusion about the results of this expedition. Real scientific evidence has never yet disproved the Bible. 64

Tell en-Nasbeh and the city of Mizpeh. Between 1927 and 1935 an expedition was undertaken by the Palestine Institute of the Pacific School of Religion at the mound of Tell en-Nasbeh, about eight miles north of Jerusalem. Dr. F. W. Bade was director, but the publication work fell to Dr. C. C. McCown upon the death of Dr. Bade in 1936.

The most important discovery at the mound had to do with the city's fortifications. In the early history of the city it had a wall only about a yard thick. But around 900 B.C. this small wall was replaced by a massive wall about 13 feet thick. It was unusual for such a small town to have such fortifications. The suggestion has been made that this wall was constructed at the time King Baasha of Israel fortified Ramah **"that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah"** (I Kings 15:16-22).

Thereupon Asa appealed for help from the Syrian king, and Baasha left Ramah. After this, Asa carried the building material Baasha was using at Ramah and fortified Geba and Mizpeh therewith.

However, it must be said that there is not universal agreement among archaeologists that Tell en-Nasbeh is really the site of Mizpeh. But the accuracy of the Scriptures is not involved in the issue, whether the identity of the site be proved or not. 65

1. George L. Robinson, *The Bearing of Archaeology on the Old Testament*, pp. 174, 175.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 176.
3. John Garstang, *The Story of Jericho*, pp. 129, 130; Sir Charles Marston, *New Bible Evidence*, pp. 135, 136; Barbara Bowen, *The Bible Lives Today*, pp. 85-87.
4. Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, p. 130.
5. Garstang, *The Story of Jericho* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1940), p. 138.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 142.
7. George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, ed. 1937, p. 116; Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 184, 185; Melvin G. Kyle, *Excavating Kirjath-Sepher's Ten Cities*, pp. 34-35.
8. Kyle, *ibid.*, pp. 51, 48.
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10. *Ibid.*, p. 44; Ovid R. Sellers, "Sling Stones of Biblical Times," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, II, No. 4, Dec. 1939, pp. 41-44.
11. Kyle, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-110.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74; 181.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 78; W. F. Albright, "King Joiachin in Exile," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, V, No. 4, Dec. 1942, pp. 49-51.
15. Kyle, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-148; 197, 198.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131; Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, p. 140.
17. Kyle, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 68.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 72; 75; 78, 79; 199, 200.
19. George L. Robinson, *The Bearing of Archaeology on the Old Testament*, p. 172; W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, pp. 160, 161.

20. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 105; 169.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 135.
22. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
23. *Loc. cit.*
24. Free, *op. cit.*, p. 152.
25. Barbara Bowen, *The Bible Lives Today*, pp. 82, 83.
26. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 127.
27. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, p. 255.
28. Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 178, 179.
29. Finegan, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
30. W. F. Albright, "Excavations and Results at Tell el Ful," *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 1922, 1923, pp. 43, 44, 45.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 45; W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, pp. 47, 48.
32. Albright, Annual, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 8; Albright, A. of P and B, pp. 47, 48.
33. Albright, Annual, *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 18.
34. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-104.
35. Finegan, *op. cit.*, p. 145; Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 152.
36. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 169; Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
37. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 170, 171.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 157, 104.
39. W. H. Boulton, *Archaeology Explains*, pp. 33-35; Free, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
40. W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 41; Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 179, 180.
41. W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 124; see also *ibid.*, pp. 124, 125; also Chester C. McCown, *The Ladder of Progress in Palestine*, pp. 179-182.
42. McCown, *ibid.*, p. 180.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 181.
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46. Nelson Glueck, "On the Trail of King Solomon's Mines," *The National Geographic Magazine*, Feb. 1944, p. 233f.; Blake Clark, "How the Bible Is Building Israel," *The Reader's Digest*, March 1954, pp. 26-30.
47. Clark, *ibid.*; Nelson Glueck, *The Other Side of Jordan*, pp. 59-61.
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52. Finegan, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
53. Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology*, p. 185; Barbara Bowen, *The Bible Lives Today*, p. 80.
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55. Finegan, *op. cit.*, p. 155; Bowen, *op. cit.*, p. 80; Kenyon, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
56. Finegan, *op. cit.*, pp. 155, 156; Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 321.
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63. J. McKee Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible*, p. 109. For additional material on the Lachish Letters see Cyrus H. Gordon, *The Living Past*, ch. IX; W. F. Albright, "A Supplement to Jeremiah: The Lachish Ostraca," *Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 61, Feb. 1936, pp. 10-16.
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~ end of chapter 10 ~

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