

Archaeological Confirmation of the Old Testament

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Biblical archaeology is a specialized branch within the developing science of archaeology which has itself been described as an "expanding universe." It includes the study of the material remains of antiquity of Palestine and of those countries which from the earliest time to the first century of the Christian era were brought into relation with it. These comprise the remains of buildings, art, inscriptions and every artefact which leads to an understanding of the history and life not merely of the Hebrews or of Palestine but of those countries, especially Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Asia Minor, "Mesopotamia" (Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria) and Persia (Iran), which bear more or less closely on the Biblical record.

I. THE NATURE OF OLD TESTAMENT ARCHAEOLOGY

It is little more than a century since organized surface exploration in these countries began. At first these were mainly directed to the identification of sites well-known from the Bible itself. Manners and customs, languages and traditions, were noted before they were lost under advancing Western influences. The geography of Bible lands and visible remains of antiquity were gradually recorded until today more than 25,000 sites within this region and dating to Old Testament times, in their broadest sense, have been located. Several hundreds of these long-buried ruins have been sounded, but less than a hundred have been thoroughly explored, none exhaustively.

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Among the finds are about half a million clay documents in the cuneiform script, dating from about 3,300 B.C. to 50 A.D., widely used throughout the area. In addition there are numerous papyri and inscriptions on stone potsherd and other substances. Types of settlement examined range from the earliest camp and cave sites to villages and royal cities. This unprecedented abundance of material should not, however, divert attention from certain limitations which accompany the progress of archaeology as a science. The knowledge of some periods and places is still very defective, a reminder of the unreliability of any hypothesis or argument from silence. Unlike the steady increase in our knowledge from the written documents, the methods of excavation have only recently been developed to the point where stratigraphy, the succession of levels of occupation, and typology, the study of groups of related objects, can be considered reliable. Thus many earlier reports of discovery need reevaluation. In this way the fallen walls of Jericho, often quoted both as an outstanding evidence of the truth of a Biblical historical fact and as evidence for dating the entry of the Israelites into Canaan, have recently been by more modern methods as confidently dated to about the time of Abraham. Nevertheless, much of the advance in our understanding of the Old Testament, its language and history, its places and peoples, can be attributed to archaeological discovery.

II. INSCRIPTIONS

By far the largest mass of evidence for comparison with the Scriptures is to be found in the Ancient Near Eastern inscriptions. Few contemporary documents of Old Testament times have been found so far in Palestine itself, so that illustrations must be drawn from the writings of neighboring countries.

The Early Narratives of Genesis

These have long been compared with Sumerian and Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian) epics. Their story of creation (*enuma eliš*) survives in several versions (from the twentieth century B.C. and later) which are themselves probably copies of earlier Sumerian originals of which fragmentary clay tablets survive. In these their view of the origin of the universe and of man is stated. The whole creation was for them a divine act *ex nihilo*. At first the earth was covered with a watery chaos; light is mentioned before the existence of luminaries; heaven and earth are distinct divisions of the firmament and the luminaries precede the creation of plant and animal life. Finally comes the special and deliberate creation, made from the earth's clay and blood, which was called Man, whose primary duty is the service of the gods. These similarities with the Genesis accounts, however, have to be rescued from a host of extraneous matter which fill the ancient poem. The differences between it and the Biblical record are too numerous for the latter

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to have evolved from the Mesopotamian epics and the similarities might well be explained by both versions going back to the common element of a primary historical fact.

As with the creation epics, the Babylonians wrote of a great Flood. This was included, as the eleventh tablet, in a series now called the Epic of Gilgamesh which sets out an individual's search for eternal life. As the story unfolds it is impossible not to be struck by the resemblances with Genesis 6-9, even though the majority of the text is far different. Details are given of the construction of the ark to accommodate both men and beasts; the flood waters come from above and below, birds are released to test how far the waters have receded before the ark finally lands "upon one of the mountains of Urartu" (so Gen. 8:4). As with the creation story, it may also be argued that this "myth" also reflects an historic fact. The flood is mentioned and marked in a number of these early documents as cutting right across the early history of mankind. Archaeological evidence of flood-deposits at Ur and Kish, though interpreted by their discoverers to be the flood of this Sumerian legend which they equate with the Flood of Genesis (C. L. Woolley, *Ur Excavations*, IV, 1956, pp. 15-19) is much questioned and thought by other scholars to represent some unusual local inundation. A. Heidel concludes in his study of the Gilgamesh epic that,

as in the creation epic we still do not know how the Biblical and Babylonian narratives of the deluge are related historically. The available evidence proves nothing beyond that there is a genetic relationship between the Genesis and Babylonian versions. The skeleton is the same in both cases, but the flesh and blood and, above all, the animating spirit are different. It is here that we reach the most far reaching divergencies between the Hebrew and Mesopotamian stories (*The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 1945, p. 268; see also his *The Babylonian Genesis*, pp. 139 f.).

The stories of creation and the flood have no close parallels in Egyptian literature, so most scholars have assumed that Israel borrowed these traditions from the East during the period of the greatest Assyrian influence (ninth to seventh centuries B.C.) or even in the later Jewish exile in Babylonia. However, a fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic dated to the second millennium B.C. has recently been found at Megiddo, and this, combined with such traditions as that of the Tower of Babel which may well refer to the ziggurat of Babylon at some time when that city flourished between the third millennium and its destruction about 1600 B.C., has led to a renewed appraisal. It is now confidently stated that these narratives, whether imported and adapted by, or indigenous to, the Hebrews, could be dated in the second millennium. The same is said of the substance of the Table of Nations in Genesis to, which represents the state of knowledge towards the end of that millennium, if not earlier. A further factor which has induced this change has been the recent publication of Sumerian texts which, in a number of instances, provide

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earlier parallels with the Hebrew stories than was hitherto possible. Among these is an epic which possibly describes the state of life in "paradise" which was naturally irrigated (Gen. 2:6). Birth was without pain or travail and a curse followed the eating of a plant. Perhaps more striking, as also more certain as a reading, is the description of the specially Created woman named Nin-ti, a Sumerian word which can be equally translated "the lady of the rib" and "the lady who makes alive," reminding the reader of Eve, "the mother of all living," fashioned from the rib of Adam (S. N. Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer*, pp. 169-175). Another text describes the time when all men spoke in one language and unitedly served the gods.

The Patriarchal Period

A revolution of thought about the historicity of the patriarchal period is now being brought about following the discovery of more than 70,000 inscribed clay tablets from ancient Alalakh and Mari in Syrian (eighteenth to seventeenth centuries B.C.) and Nuzi in C. Iraq (fifteenth century B.C.). These now provide a detailed view of the historical, social, legal and economic background of these times. Opinions as to the placing of the patriarchs within the first half of the second millennium vary, Albright and De Vaux placing Abraham between 1900-1700 B.C.; Rowley in the eighteenth to seventeenth centuries and Cyrus Gordon as late as the Amarna age (fourteenth century). Part of the uncertainty is due to the current controversy over the exact date of Hammurabi of Babylon (Albright, 1728-1686, Sidney Smith 1792-1750 B.C.). The tablets reflect the composite population of the Upper Euphrates (northwestern Mesopotamia), an area in which Genesis 11:10 ff. locates Abram's ancestors. Harran flourishes at this time and the Mari texts link Turakhi (Terah), Sarugi (Serug) and Nahur (Nahor) as names of districts perhaps derived from the families or tribes who once inhabited them. It has already been shown that some scholars consider the early chapters of Genesis as showing a formative influence from this same area (W. F. Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 73).

Many parallels between the predominantly Hurrian (Horite) tablets of Nuzi have been described by Gordon and Speiser. Thus the relation of Eliezer and Abraham, as adoptee to a childless couple who yields his right to the real heir, is now explained (Gen. 15:2-4), as is the action of Sarah in providing Hagar for her husband. Moreover, Abraham may have felt able to break with contemporary custom in driving Hagar away only when given a special assurance

by God to do so (Gen. 21:12). The possession of *teraphim* (household gods) constituted the right to the chief inheritance and honor in the family (Gen. 31:19, 30-35). It was common practice for a man to work for his bride, as did Jacob among the Aramaean tribe of Laban. Oral blessing having legal force, and levirate marriage, the right of a daughter to inherit property, and a form of sale-adoption (cf. Exod. 21:7-11) are other customs found at this time. The force of these parallels is all the stronger

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since the Alalakh texts show that throughout the Upper Euphrates region in the early second millennium there was an essentially homogeneous culture with a Sumerian basis but a mixed Amorite-Hurrian development. The Nuzi texts reflect a later stage in this culture. It must be continually remembered that the Old Testament implies, as do these documents, a mixed population in Palestine including Hittites whose early infiltration there is now shown by the Alalakh texts. M. R. Lehmann has shown how applicable the Hittite laws are to the negotiations by Abraham for the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 23). The distinctive features of legal contracts (nathan with the meaning "to sell") ; the patriarch's concern over obtaining a title to the land free from feudal obligations; the designation of details including the trees, are all characteristic of these Hittite business documents. As Dr. Lehmann has rightly emphasized,

We have thus found that Genesis 23 is permeated with the knowledge of intricate subtleties of Hittite laws and customs correctly corresponding to the time of Abraham and fitting in with the Hittite features of the Biblical account. With the final destruction of Hattusas about 1200 B.C. these laws must have fallen into oblivion. This is another instance in which a late dating must be firmly rejected. Our study again confirms the authenticity of the "background material" of the Old Testament, which makes it such an invaluable source for the study of all the social, economic and legal aspects of the period of history it depicts (*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, Feb. 1953, pp. 15 ff.).

This increase in the knowledge of the patriarchal age from the texts, combined with the archaeological evidence, has led scholars of many shades of religious opinion to affirm the "historical" nature of the patriarchal narratives. There is, however, a wide divergence in their definition of "history" (Albright, *op. cit.*, p. 72). Professor H. H. Rowley claims that "it is not because scholars of today begin with more conservative presuppositions than their predecessors that they have a much greater respect for the Patriarchal stories than was formerly common, but because the evidence warrants it."

Egypt and the Exodus

Daily life in ancient Egypt is abundantly illustrated in many tomb paintings, papyri and objects. For some periods, however, there are few historical texts and one of these is that part of the Second Intermediate Age (about 1786-1550 B.C.) in which Joseph himself is probably to be placed (Dynasties 15-16, about 1700 B.C.). There can be no doubt, however, that some of the customs recounted in Genesis 34 to 50 are characteristic of this period. Similarly, there is increasing evidence for situating many names, terms and episodes in these narratives at this time also, though much further study is required (K. Kitchen, *The Joseph Narratives*, Tyndale Old Testament Lecture, 1957). One papyrus of a century before Joseph (as dated here) describes the prison system of the period and, on the verso dated only about

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40 years before Joseph was sold into Egypt, lists 79 servants in an Egyptian household of whom 45 were Asiatics bearing distinctive west-Semitic names (e.g., Shiprah, Menahem), probably sold into slavery as was Joseph himself. This list adds the Egyptian names given to the slaves in addition to notes about their office (e.g., "chief over the house," "house-servant") and their sex (W. C. Hayes, *A Late Middle Kingdom Papyrus in the Brooklyn Museum*, 1955). It is also to be noted that at this period a number of descriptive stories are found both in the papyri (Senuhe) and in the Babylonian tablets (Idrimi).

Evidence for the entry of Israel into Palestine is mainly archaeological (see p. 17). The "Hebrews" might well be among the semi-nomadic bands of *habiru*, who infiltrated into the open lands between the city-states at this as at earlier times. The earliest mention of Israel in contemporary documents is a reference in the stele of the Egyptian king Merneptah (1222 B.C.) which shows that the Israelites, though poor, were already in the land. The manners and life of the Canaanites and other groups already in the land are now known from the tablets of Ras Shamra (Ugarit), the most prosperous Canaanite seaport of the fourteenth century, and from documents found at Alalakh (level IV) and Amarna (Egypt). The Ras Shamra texts include many in a unique alphabetic script and a language closely related to the Hebrew of this period. Myths, historical and business documents reveal the religion and ritual of the northern Canaanites with its emphasis on fertility and sex (J. Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan, The Ras Shamra Texts and their Relevance to the Old Testament*, 1957).

The Monarchy

It is, however, only when the Israelites are in contact with the Assyrians and Babylonians that, so far, direct allusions are made to Biblical persons and historical events. Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria (859-824 B.C.) lists the "200 chariots and 10,000 men of Ahab, the Israelite" who supported Irhurleni of Hamath at the Battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C. He also describes his defeat of Hazael of Damascus near Mt. Senir (Hermon, the Shenir of Deut. 3:9). In 841 B.C. he received the submission of Jehu, king of Samaria (called Beth-Omri in these Assyrian texts as Damascus is sometimes designated Beth-Hazael). Jehu may have been trying unsuccessfully to seek Assyrian support against Hazael (II Kings 10:31 f.; 21:3, 22 f.). His submission is not directly referred to in the Hebrew records; the illustration of it on the Black Obelisk in the British Museum does, however, provide the only extant contemporary portrayal of a person mentioned in the Old Testament. Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.), called by his native name Pul (u) in both Babylonian texts and II Kings 15 :19, met, opposition from "Azariah of Judah" and received tribute from Menahem of Samaria in 739 B.C. The amount of 50 shekels paid by each of the Israelite leaders is the current price of a slave, here paid to avoid deportation (II Kings 15 :20). A few years

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later Tiglath-pileser claims to have marched through "the borders of Israel" against Phoenician and Philistinian towns. These operations seem to have been carried out in answer to an appeal for help from the pro-Assyrian Ahaz (whom he calls by his full name Jehoahaz) who paid tribute in 734 B.C. The Assyrian annals tell how Pekah was replaced by Hoshea; while an inscribed sherd, found in the ruins of Hazor (destroyed by the Assyrians in 732 B.C. when they overran Galilee) bears his name (Pqh). When it is realized that the historical

documents which survive from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III are incomplete, the extent of these parallels in agreement with the Hebrew history is most instructive.

The resistance of Israel to Assyria soon brought Shalmaneser V to besiege Samaria in 724 B.C. but he died before the city fell and his successor, Sargon II, claims the final capture in his first year (722/1 B.C.; so [unnamed] II Kings 17:6). Amongst the booty he claimed the capture of "the gods in whom they trusted," an interesting and corroborative allusion at this time to the polytheism of Israel and Samaria which was continually criticized by contemporary Hebrew prophets (D. J. Wiseman, *Journal of the Victoria Institute*, 1955, pp. 28 f.). This same text of Sargon bears an account of the desolation of Babylon strongly reminiscent of the language of Isaiah 13. Sargon records the resettlement of Samaria with persons brought from other parts of his empire (cf. II Kings 17:24) and tablets from Guzana (Gozan, Tell Halaf) show that Jewish exiles were later living there. Israel was now broken and absorbed into the Assyrian provincial system so that Judah faced Assyria alone. Sennacherib, son of Sargon, attacked Judah in 701 B.C., and records his capture of Lachish and the surrounding villages both in his annals and on his palace-reliefs (so II Kings 18:13 f.). His inscriptions agree with the Biblical record also in stating that Hezekiah initially paid him tribute, the variations in the weight of tribute being perhaps due to the different system of measurement then prevailing. Both accounts agree that Jerusalem was besieged at this time, Sennacherib claiming that he "shut up Hezekiah, the Jew, in his royal city like a bird in a cage." The absence of any statement in the Assyrian history relating the fall of the city could be taken as acquiescence in the Judaeen claim to victory. There are, however, some difficulties in aligning the Assyrian and Hebrew accounts chronologically. Albright considers that the Hebrews conflated the accounts of two invasions and that the siege of Jerusalem came nearer the end of Sennacherib's reign in 681 B.C.; the writer has elsewhere tried to show the inadequacy of this view (in *Documents from Old Testament Times*, D. Winton Thomas, ed., 1958, where he discusses the relation between Assyrian and Babylonian historical records and the Old Testament). Sennacherib's assassination (II Kings 19:37) is the subject of both Assyrian and Babylonian texts. Sennacherib, according to his personal letters, directed much of his effort against the Chaldaean rebel Marduk-apla-iddin II (Merodach-Baladan), who, when temporarily reigning in Babylon in 703/2 B.C., sought Hezekiah

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as an ally when it appeared that further war with Assyria would end successfully (Isa. 39:1 ff.). Esarhaddon of Assyria (681-669 B.C.) included among his tributaries "Menasseh, king of Judah." According to the terms of treaties to which such vassals subscribed, they had to accept the god of Assyria as their god and bind their followers "for ever" to allegiance to Assyria. Assyrian letters tell how "the inhabitants of Judah sent 10 manas of silver" as part of their annual dues. The study of these treaties does much to show the background of thought in the Biblical period. Like the Biblical "covenants" they are arranged in direct speech with a historical prologue, divine witnesses followed by stipulations and end with curses and blessings. This form goes back to the second millennium B.C. The distinctive aspect of the Old Testament covenants at all periods is, of course, that they are made and witnessed by the one God directly with his people and the purpose is spiritual (G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 1955; D. J. Wiseman, *The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon*, 1958).

Babylonian tablets also help to elucidate the history of Judah before the Exile. The Babylonian Chronicle, a unique, reliable and contemporary historical source, recounts the movement of Egyptian troops to support the Assyrian rearguard action at Harran after the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., graphically described as in Nahum. It will be observed that, as often, the non-Hebrew texts and the historical interpretation of Scripture (II Kings 23:29 as an instance of 'al with the force of 'el "against") are explained now by details given of the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. The same chronicle records the attacks on the Arab tribes of Qedar and Hazor prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 49:28 ff.). These oracles were formerly said to be a late reflection of attacks made on these tribes in 648 B.C. or a confusion with Nebuchadrezzar's raids there in 681 B.C. "On the second day of the month of Adar he (Nebuchadrezzar) captured the city and arrested the king. He appointed a king of his own choice, received heavy tribute and sent them (the booty and prisoners) off to Babylon" (Babylonian Chronicle). This is a direct reference to a crucial point of Biblical history, the divine punishment on the broken covenant foretold by Isaiah and Jeremiah and marked by the Jewish exile which now begins. The captured king was Jehoiachin, whose presence as an exile in Babylon is also attested by a number of ration-tablets found there. The Babylonian nominee was Mattaniah-Zedeqiah. The date (16th March 597), now precisely known for the first time, is in accord with the Biblical notes (II Chron. 36:10; II Kings 24:12), which place the event in the spring, at the change over from reckoning Nebuchadrezzar's seventh to eighth regnal year. These same texts had mentioned the fall of Ashkelon in 604 B.C., an event which must have added weight to the prophecies of Jeremiah to the approaching disaster, for in the same month a solemn fast was proclaimed in Jerusalem (Jer. 36:9). A great battle in 601 B.C., in which Egypt defeated the Babylonians, is also recorded. This event, which was unsuspected from either Biblical or non-Biblical sources, explains why

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Jehoiakim, against the advice of Jeremiah, now put his trust in Egypt and broke with Assyria. The scantiness of extra-Biblical sources for an understanding of this period or of the times of the Exile preclude undue weight being placed on the numerous hypotheses which abound. In 587, after a long siege, reflected in the Lachish letters, Jerusalem was destroyed. Apart from the few references to Jehoiachin and Judaeans among the exiles in Babylonia, there is no reference to this event in contemporary documents. This is not surprising, for many similar exiles brought from many different countries to Babylonia as a result of Nebuchadnezzar's extensive campaigns are listed in the same texts. Moreover, from this time onwards the Babylonians were increasingly using more perishable writing materials inscribed in Aramaic which have not survived. Cyrus has left details of his policy of religious toleration which encouraged the restoration of holy places formerly destroyed or neglected by the Babylonians. A glimpse of Jewish life and customs abroad in the time of Ezra or Nehemiah is afforded by the Elephantine papyri from Egypt.

One of the major historical problems of the book of Daniel has been the reference to "Darius the Mede." Persian and Babylonian records make no reference to any intervening ruler of royal status but clearly state that Cyrus himself took over the Neo-Babylonian Empire from Nabonidus after 15 days in which the city was under a military governor Gubaru (Gobryas). As a result there is a general agreement among scholars that "he [Darius the Mede] has no place in history, and that he is a fictitious creation out of confused traditions" (H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede*, p. 5). The recent discovery of a stele inscription from Harran naming a "king of the Medes" as late as 540 B.C. reopens the whole question. One suggestion put

forward is that Cyrus had a separate throne-name (Darius) as conqueror and king of the Medes.

III. EXCAVATIONS

The evidence of the archaeological excavations and researches at Biblical sites provides no less valuable, even if often more general, evidence for comparison with the statements of the Old Testament. As a result of developing techniques, sites are now located, identified and explored, their successive periods of occupation traced and dated by characteristic types of objects (e.g., pottery, implements, seals, architectural and art styles) with greater precision than formerly. Thus the first entry of the semi-nomadic Hebrews under Abraham into the hill-country of south Palestine seems to have taken place early in the second millennium B.C. when such towns as Bethel, Shechem and Dothan, associated with the early patriarchs, are seen to have been in existence. Hebron was not yet occupied (so Gen. 23:2; 35:27). From the material remains it would seem that about 2000 B.C. there were few towns but that in the following century a new era (M. Bronze II) began and sites like Jericho were reoccupied. Gezer, Megiddo and Hazor were

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already flourishing Canaanite cities with high places and altars. Kyle and Albright have shown that Sodom, Gomorrah and Zoar in all probability now lie beneath the southern waters of the Dead Sea and they, as Glueck later, found adjacent sites in this once densely populated area abandoned about this same time. It appears that the population hurriedly left older settlements and returned to semi-nomadic life. Genesis 14 is now considered "historical," since the route taken by the coalition of kings followed the existing "Kings Highway" (east of Jordan, Num. 20:17) marked by a line of fortresses of which the remains can be dated to this time. Although the kings themselves cannot be certainly identified, the personal names (e.g., Tudhalia, Ariukthe identity of Amraphel with Ammurapi is unlikely) and the place-names fit well with the contemporary onomastica. Albright considers that this chapter cannot be dated later than the sixteenth century and states:

It is very striking to note that none of the important religious centers of Israel in the time of the monarchy whose remains do not show any occupation at so early a date, appears in connection with the narrative of the Patriarchs. If the Patriarchal stories grew up round cult-centers, we should expect to find the Patriarchs playing a bigger role in them" (*op. cit.*, p. 75).

The Exodus and Conquest

Archaeological evidence for the period of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt is only of a general illustrative nature; that is, many of the customs and details mentioned in the Joseph narratives can be compared with tomb paintings or objects from earlier or later periods. Excavations do show, however, the major building activity of Dynasty 19 in the Delta area where Rameses II set up his capital about 1290 with the aim of controlling his Asiatic Empire.

The store-city of Raamses (Exod. 1:11), built by Israelite labor-gangs, is the "House of Raamses" in the splendid city-ruins identified by the majority with Tanis, later Zoan (by others with the nearby ruins of Qantir). Pitham is Tell Retabeh and the "Reed Sea," crossed by the Israelites in the first stage of their exodus, the area of papyrus marshes east of Tanis

and Succoth (excavated by Naville at Tell el-Maskentah) . Their route to the Sinai range of mountains is today marked by Merkah and Serabit-el-khadim with its turquoise mines in which proto-sinaitic (early alphabetic) inscriptions have been found. Both were occupied during this century. The survey of (Trans)-jordan by Glueck and Lankester-Harding shows that before the thirteenth century Edom and Moab were sparsely populated by groups of semi-nomads who then settled down in fortified villages and were able to prevent the direct transit of the Israelites. South Canaan is found to be a land of city-states (principally Jerusalem, Lachish, Hebron, Gezer) between which the semi-nomadic peoples infiltrated as is shown also by the constant reference in the Amarna, Alalakh and Ras Shamra tablets to the Habiru. The Israelites, perhaps a group of the "Habiru," were armed only with light weapons,

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and having no siege equipment avoided the heavier fortified localities. Excavations at Jericho (Tell es-Sultan) since 1952 show that the ruins of the late bronze age city (after 1500 B.C.) suffered considerable denudation and very little remains. An Iron-Age foundation has survived only because it was dug deep into earlier levels. The evidence allows the presumption that Jericho, too, fell in the Late Bronze Age at the same time as other southern cities. The fallen walls, once confidently ascribed by Garstang to Joshua's day, are now known to be 300 years earlier in date. Another city, the destruction of which Joshua claimed, presents difficulties in relation to the Biblical evidence. Ai ("the ruins," if the same as Et-Tel) has been found to have lain unoccupied after 2400 B.C. except for a temporary settlement of Israelites there about 1000 B.C. A number of theories are put forward to explain this; that the later Israelites explain the "ruins" by attributing them to Joshua; that the neighboring Bethelites used it as an outpost in their defense against the invaders (but there would hardly then have been a "king of Ai" as in Josh. 8), or even that the story of the conquest of Bethel was later attributed to "Ai." The difficulty remains, but further evidence may provide some more adequate explanation. Bethel (only indirectly mentioned in the conquest narrative) was excavated in 1934 and found to have been violently destroyed by fire in the late thirteenth century, a date for the conquest of the land to which much evidence again points. The finely built Canaanite houses were succeeded by Israelite buildings and occupation of a poorer quality. The same situation has been found at Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) where the destruction is further marked by an inscribed and dated sherd (1220 B.C.) . Debir (Tell Beit Mirsim) was razed to its foundations by invaders between about 1250 and 1200 B.C. Y. Yadin, at present clearing the vast ruins of Hazor in Galilee, has uncovered a large Canaanite settlement and shrines of this same period, the destruction of which he attributes to Joshua. All this points to a planned campaign as outlined in Joshua 10. Unbroken occupation of the Egyptian-dominated strongholds of Taanach and Beth-shan confirm that the Israelites with their tribal organization avoided these large fortresses which guarded the Esdraelon plain.

The Monarchy

Before the entry of the Israelites, the Philistines, a branch of the "Sea Peoples" entering the eastern Mediterranean at this time, had established themselves in East Cyprus (Sinda) and on the Palestinian coast. Their presence is marked by pottery bearing characteristic patterns, found at Gezer, Beth-Shemesh, Tell Qasilah and other sites, but their origin is still obscure. By 1050 B.C. traces of the destruction caused by these same peoples are found at Shiloh and distant Beth-Shan. Discoveries at Bethel and Tell Beit-Mirsim in Palestine and Ras Shamra in Syria show the wealthy local Canaanite culture based on an extensive trade and Egyptian influence. In contrast, the poorer Israelites who succeeded them have left a cruder art,

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poorer pottery and more vulnerable town walls. Their daily life is by now well-known from the excavations at Ai, Mizpah (if identical with Tell-enNasbeh), Beth-Shemesh and Beth-zur. The Philistines seem to have introduced the technique of iron-working into Palestine and thus to have had an economic hold over Israel (I Sam. 13:19-22) until their defeat by Saul and David. Saul's fortified palace at Gibeah yielded the first iron implement yet discovered in the hill country. Life in Gibeah was simpler in the days before it too fell to the Philistines. With the turn of the tide 'of military power an industrial revolution took place in David's day (the beginning of the Iron Age I period). Iron replaced flints in sickles and weapons, and iron nails enabled improved building techniques to be used (I Chron. 22:3). The excavations show a steadily increasing standard of living even for the country folk under David (about 1000 to 961 B.C.); otherwise archaeology reveals nothing of the king's work unless some of the fortifications of Jerusalem (Ophel) can be attributed to him.

Solomon built extensively and to do this used his power as a merchant-prince controlling the trade routes from Arabia to Syria and the East. At Ezion-geber (Gulf of Aqabah) he developed large copper and iron smelting plants and a harbor. This trade is marked by a sherd found at Tell Qasileh marked "from Ophir," and chariots traded from Egypt and breeding-horses from Cilicia (so I Kings 10:28 f.) increased the nation's wealth. Heavy taxes led to a reorganization of the administrative districts where the governors had dwellings, as found at Beth-Shemesh and Lachish, where taxes could also be stored. More than 500 horses could have been stabled at Megiddo where accommodation was provided for them and for the provincial administrators. The taxes and forced labor gangs were employed on the reconstruction of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer (I Kings 9:15) and at each of these places identical gateways of the Solomonic period have been recovered.

The Temple, being built under the direction of foreign (Phoenician) craftsmen, followed the current trend and was divided into an outer court, from which a single door between two pillars led directly into a large holy place or room (*hekal*) and in turn into a small inner sanctuary or "holy of holies" (*debir*). This plan is clearly traced in the temple found at Hazor in 1957 and in a smaller temple 'at Tell Tainat in Syria. The decorations of cherubim, palm trees and open work can be seen in contemporary ivory working and the temple furniture (lavens, censers, fleshhooks) seen in the objects found at a number of Palestinian and Syrian sites.

The period of the divided monarchy to which there are references in the secular inscriptions is becoming better known from actual excavations. The work of De Vaux at Tell el Far'ah (Tirzah) confirms that the site was no longer in active use after Samaria had become the northern capital. The Harvard expedition to Samaria uncovered six successive Israelite levels of occupation; the original foundation and building (I) of fine workmanship by Omri-Ahab with ivories used in decorating and furnishing the royal

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palace (I Kings 22:39; Amos 6:14); and the pool where Ahab's chariot was probably washed down (I Kings 22:38). The citadel of Jehu with its strong walls (II) was destined to survive until replaced by a Hellenistic construction about 150 B.C. Here were found 63 inscribed

ostraca or accounts of exports and imports of wine and oil showing that Samaria was still an active trading and administrative center. The occupation of Jeroboam II (about 786-746 B.C.) and his Israelite successors can be traced in levels IV-VI. Destruction levels in various cities can be attributed to the invasions of Tiglath-pileser III in 734-732, the ruin at Hazor (level V) and Megiddo (level III) being particularly heavy, The change of regime at Samaria when it fell to Assyria in 722 is described, in archaeological terms, by a poorer and partial reoccupation shown by pottery types imported by the new settlers brought in from the East (II Kings 17:24). As Israel was henceforth incorporated in the Assyrian provincial system, such traces as have been found show an increasing external influence.

In Judah, excavations at Lachish (1932-1938) have revealed the very city walls, gateway, ramp and weapons depicted on the reliefs of Sennacherib at Nineveh which parade his siege of that city in 701 B.C. A vast communal burial pit may mark the resting place of many of the defenders. Hezekiah's ability to withstand successfully the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem may well be due to the precaution taken to ensure the water supply through the 1700 foot "Siloam tunnel" discovered in 1880. It bore a Hebrew inscription describing this remarkable engineering feat, but the work was probably eased by the use of earlier Canaanite tunnels similar to those found at other sites. The lintel of a large tomb cut out of the rock at Jerusalem for "Shebna, who is over the house," much criticized by Isaiah (22:15), is now in the British Museum, if the interpretation of the inscription made by Avigad is accepted.

The Egyptian resistance to the increasing Babylonian power is shown by the destruction of Megiddo (level II) by Necho II of Egypt. It was here that Josiah was slain while vainly trying to maintain his independence. The fall of Carchemish to Nebuchadrezzar is shown by the excavation there conducted by Sir C. L. Woolley in 1931-32. In 598 the Babylonians advanced for the final siege of Jerusalem, destroying Lachish and many other towns, most of which were never reoccupied, or only sparsely so, after the return from exile. During the Exile, stamped sealings marked "Eliakim, steward of Yaukin (Jehoiachin)" show how the royal estates were managed while the Judean king was held hostage in Babylon. The seals of Jaazaniah (Jer. 11:8) and Gedaliah, governor of Judah after Jerusalem fell in 587 B.C., have been found at Tell-en-Nasbeh and Lachish respectively. The period of the Exile itself both in Palestine and Babylonia is obscure. In the latter it was a time of gradual decline both economically and culturally, and the texts show that it was a period without literary distinction or innovation. For this reason the commonly accepted view that the Exile was a period of great influence on the Jews themselves must remain a theory. The state of the

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Jews and their religion is only known, from extra-Biblical evidence, in the excavations and texts of distant Elephantine (Egypt) . The archives of the fifth century from Nippur prove little beyond the fact that a handful of Jews remained there when many of their brethren had returned to Judah. Archaeological discoveries show that the reoccupation of Judah was slow and that though Gezer, Lachish, Gibeah, Bethel, Beth-zur and Hazor show traces of settlement in the Persian period the land did not flourish until the Greek period. Under Persian influence coins (marked *Yhd*—"Judah") first appear. By contrast with the scriptural account of these same periods, this survey shows how little, and often general, is the evidence afforded by archaeology as distinct from the inscriptions.

IV. THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

One result of the inscriptional and archaeological discoveries briefly summarized above has been the gradual reappraisal of the literature of the Old Testament and a fresh attempt to place it in its contemporary setting. This is still a very difficult task by reason of the virtual absence of writings surviving from Palestine itself and of the necessarily subjective nature of this form of literary criticism. Thus, for example, Albright, in the light of the poetic forms of the Ugaritic texts, now dates such Hebrew poems as the song of Deborah (Judg. 5) and the song of Miriam (Exod. 15) to the time of Moses, the oracles of Balaam (Num. 22-24) to the thirteenth century and the blessings of Jacob (Gen. 49) and the blessings of Moses (Deut. 33) as not later than the eleventh century. Similarly, in opposition to the widely accepted results of literary criticism, he would assign many psalms, including Psalm 68, to this early date. "This Psalm," he writes, "has often been attributed to the Maccabean period (second century B.C.) in spite of the fact that Jewish scholars who translated it into Greek in the same century did not understand it any better than did the Massorettes a thousand years later. This is typical of much so-called 'critical' work in the biblical field" (in *Religion in Life*, 21, 1952, pp. 543 f.). It has already been shown that other narratives (e.g., Genesis 10, 23, Isa. 13) bear the marks of earlier composition than has been hitherto generally allowed. It is to be expected that, as the understanding of the languages, vocabulary, literary forms and methods increases as a result of the great body of written material available from both Egypt and "Mesopotamia," further studies of this kind will be made (e.g., D. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*, 1956). The important part played by scribes in the Ancient Near East and the methods and materials they employed should continue to act as a check on the more extravagant theories of the compilation of ancient texts (G. R. Driver, *Semitic Writing*, 1948). Thus, students of Akkadian literature find it difficult to endorse the place given to oral tradition by many Old Testament scholars today, for in the second millennium oral tradition supplements and does not

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exclude or supersede the written word (e.g., J. Laesse, *Oral Tradition in Mesopotamia*, 1954).

The discoveries first made in 1947 of manuscripts of the Old Testament at Qumran and neighboring sites are now well-known. These include the first copies of the Hebrew text dating from the pre-Christian era (except for fragments like the Nash papyrus of about 100 B.C.) and now represent more than 100 individual Biblical scrolls. Every book of the Old Testament, except Esther, is found either complete (like the famous "Dead Sea Scroll" of Isaiah) or represented by fragments. It is clear that the most copied books were Deuteronomy, Isaiah and the Psalms, the books of the Law, Prophets and Writings used for popular instruction and thus the most commonly quoted by Jesus Christ in his ministry. The texts date from between about 200 B.C. to 68 A.D. (about 128 A.D. at Murabba'at)—a date corroborated by archaeological evidence—when they were stored away for safety in time of war. These discoveries are of great importance for the study of the Biblical text and, unlike the sectarian documents found with them which are currently the subject of much controversy, their value and testimony are apparent. Textual variants exist as in all groups of manuscripts from the Ancient Near East and show that more than one textual tradition is in question at this time before the establishment of the authoritative Hebrew text in the late first century or early second century A.D. Some show a close affinity to the Massoretic text, some

to the long neglected old Samaritan recension and others to the Alexandrian Septuagint, the historical worth of which is now established (F. M. Cross, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 141, pp. 9-13) . The texts bear little on the dating of Biblical books except that some of the latest datings (e.g., Ecclesiastes at 200 B.C.) are excluded (G. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, pp. 212-217). It is already clear that the Qumran scrolls have inaugurated a new and welcome period of Old Testament textual studies and give promise of further such discoveries at any time.

V. THE NATURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONFIRMATION

From the preceding summary it is hoped that it will be obvious that archaeological researches have done much to illustrate the Biblical record, its life and times, its places, peoples, customs, literature and even words. This is the very purpose of such research and its expected result. Regrettably, Biblical archaeology is treated by many as an uncoordinated body of knowledge summoned as an ally to defend or confirm the Scriptures as they understand them, and a vague idea thus abounds in some quarters, that the Bible is confirmed, or proved increasingly, with each discovery. There is rightly a general agreement that an increased understanding of Bible history has come principally from the field of archaeology and that this has tended to bring a return to a more conservative attitude in some questions, notably the histori-

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cal creditability of the patriarchal age and a disposition to credit more Biblical narratives, now comparable with early narratives from the Ancient Near East, than formerly (H. H. Rowley, *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, 1951, pp. xx-xxi). It has also led to a general appreciation of the greater reliability of the Massoretic Hebrew text than was allowed earlier in this century. On the other hand, by the very nature and limitations of archaeology as a science, many problems are also raised in the interpretation of the evidence produced, and these are not denied even if not stressed here. Similarly, difficulties may arise from a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the Bible itself and it is only when the facts, not the theories, found by extra-Biblical research are related to the facts of the Bible, itself rightly understood, that a valid comparison may be made and agreement expected. Those who stress that the value of the Old Testament lies not in its historical or literary but in its religious teaching would here contend that the great spiritual themes lie outside the scope of archaeological research. In part this is true.

They would argue that religious truth is one thing and historical fact another, that neither necessarily presupposes or accompanies the other (Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?*, pp. 2-4.). It would not seem right to belittle any evidence which directly corroborates the historicity and accuracy of the Bible at any point any more than it would be right, as sometimes happens, to interpret the evidence either of archaeology or of the Bible itself out of context in order to find proofs of Biblical accuracy. The evangelicals, believing that the Lord God has revealed himself in history and supremely in Jesus Christ, have always supported those who investigate those times and places in which the revelation was made. They encourage research both into the Bible itself and into archaeology as a branch of science. They should not be content with a mere suspension of judgment in the face of difficulties and apparent discrepancies, though this may often be necessary, but should be in the forefront of

Donald J. Wiseman, "Archaeological Confirmation of the Old Testament," Carl F.H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible. Contemporary Evangelical Thought*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958 / London: The Tyndale Press, 1959. pp.301-316.

any work which seeks to reach the truth. For them the truth is supremely the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and therefore their attitude to the Old Testament is dominated by him as he interprets and fulfills it in the New. Ultimately the truth or "confirmation" of the Old Testament rests in God and does not depend on the human science of archaeology, valuable though it is.

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<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>

The Old Testament is no longer the "lone Old Testament," at the mercy of the scientific investigator. The historian and the Bible student now have at their command literary treasures almost without number, partly contemporaneous with the Old Testament, partly older by many centuries. These rich treasures have been brought to light by the {111} perseverance and painstaking toil of archaeologists, whose discoveries have shed light on human history during a period of more than four thousand years before the opening of the Christian era.Â What is the true situation? The archaeological material which has more or less direct bearing upon our inquiry may be roughly arranged under {124} two heads: (1) The Historico-Geographical; (2) The Religio-Ethical. Requiring archaeological confirmation of an Old Testament event in order to consider it historic is not a standard applied to other historic accounts. Old Testament narratives employ a literary style that is distinctly different from the mythology written by other cultures of this time. In contrast with the non-existent animistic deities worshipped by people the Old Testament times, one of the key goals of Old Testament narrative is to demonstrate the God of Israel as an actual God, existing and moving in history (See I Kings 18; Isaiah 40:18-24; 46:1-11.) In a previous article, we discussed archaeological confirmations of the Old Testament. In this one, we will look at the archaeological discoveries that have confirmed the historical accuracy of the New Testament. There is a great deal of evidence outside of the Bible that confirms the account of Jesus as written in the Gospels. It is important to realize, however, that it is unrealistic to expect archaeology to back up every event and place in the New Testament. Our perspective is to look for what evidence exists and see whether or not it corresponds with the New Testament. Historical Confirma...Â All four Gospels give details of the crucifixion of Christ. Their accurate portrayal of this Roman practice has been confirmed by archaeology.