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OLD TESTAMENT ARCHAEOLOGY

Honors Special Studies 491

presented to

Dr. Vester Wolber

by

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Ouachita Baptist University

Arkadelphia, Arkansas

OLD TESTAMENT ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is concerned with all phases of man's activity in the past, and investigates the varied aspects of human endeavor by excavating ancient buried cities, and by examining the houses, implements, and other artifacts, by deciphering inscriptions, and by evaluating the language, literature, monuments, art, architecture, and other components of human life and achievement.

In Biblical Archaeology, all the results of Near Eastern Archaeology which bear directly or indirectly on the Biblical record are brought into focus in order to help us to understand the Scriptures better, to evaluate critical questions, to solve exegetical problems, and to gain a fuller appreciation of the ancient world in which the Bible was written. The following paragraphs illustrate these functions.

Archaeology and the Understanding of the Bible. At countless points archaeological discoveries furnish a fuller understanding of the Bible, and in this role the discoveries serve as a gigantic commentary. For example: in the patriarchal record, we read of Jacob's leaving the home of Laban in northern Mesopotamia (Genesis 31:20-21). Laban pursued after Jacob and his family to recover the family images which Rachel had stolen, and finally overtook them. Failing to find the family images, Laban pointed to his grandchildren (Jacob's children), and announced, "These children are my children" (Genesis 31:43). One is perplexed at

this indication of a grandfather claiming control over his grandchildren, for it is quite universally understood that parents, not grandparents, have such control. Specific archaeological light which helps to understand this passage came in the discovery of the Nuzi Tablets in 1925 in Northern Iraq, near Kirkuk. These tablets date from the 15th century B. C., the latter part of the Patriarchal Period (2000-1500 B. C.), and illuminate many aspects of patriarchal life and customs. In relation to Laban's statement concerning his grandchildren, the Nuzi Tablets are significant, for they show that in ancient Assyria, when a man, as Laban, adopts a son, which he evidently did with respect to Jacob, then the grandfather did exercise control not only over his adopted children, but also over their children, his grandchildren. Thus the Nuzi Tablets enable us to understand the implications of Laban's statement, "These children are my children." Furthermore, the Nuzi Tablets show that these events portrayed in the lives of the Patriarchs fit into the early period when the Bible indicates the Patriarchs lived, and not into the later period of the supposed J and E documents.

Archaeology and Critical Questions. At numerous points, subjective critical views of the Bible are elucidated objectively by specific archaeological discoveries. Such a case is the dating of the Song of Miriam (Exodus 15) in the record of the Exodus from Egypt, which by implication of its contents would date back to the period of Moses, c. 1400 B. C. Certain liberal critics have dated it to the days of the building of Solomon's Temple (c. 970 B.C.) and some as late as the

Exile (600-500 B. C.). One of the chief reasons for such a late date is the reference to "the mountain of thine inheritance, O Jehovah" (Exodus 15:17). This was assumed to refer to Mount Zion and the Temple, necessitating a date at least as late as 970 B. C., and according to some, as late as the period 600-500 B. C. Striking light on the question came from the Ras Shamra Tablets, discovered on the coast of Syria in 1929, and dating back to 1400 B. C. One of these tablets has the very same expression, "The mountain of thine inheritance," in the Baal Epic where Baal speaks of the mountain to the north. W. F. Albright commented in this connection,

It now becomes absurd to use the verse as an argument for such an improbable late date of the Song of Miriam. This beautiful triumphal hymn, which may rightfully be termed the national anthem of ancient Israel, must now be pushed back to Israelite beginnings.¹

Archaeology and Higher Criticism. It is sometimes stated that archaeological discoveries have had little if any bearing on higher criticism, as in the observation of A. W. F. Blunt, Bishop of Bradford: "It is unfortunate that...we have been treated to such statements as that 'archaeology has disproved the higher criticism.'"² On the contrary, an examination of archaeological evidence shows just the reverse.

¹"The Bible After Twenty Years of Archaeology," Religion in Life, 21:4:543, October, 1952.

²Introduction to Caiger's Bible and Spade. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936, p. vii.

Higher criticism cannot remain aloof in its ivory towers, oblivious to the vast amount of light cast on a multitude of problems by archaeological evidence. Beginning with the book of Genesis and the record of the Patriarchs, we find that the view of the late background of the Pentateuch is not supported by the evidence of the Nuzi Tablets. The implications of the broader phases as well as the small details of the Patriarchal accounts fits into the earlier part of the second millennium B. C. Here is a summary which is taken from the end of an article by the writer on "Archaeology and Higher Criticism" (January, 1957):

Israelite monotheism cannot be denied to the day of Moses, for either monotheism or an approach to it is found revealed in the archaeological records of the Near East at that time.

The documentary theory cannot remain aloof, for even the Babylonian flood account, discovered in the excavation of ancient Nineveh, fails to support the idea of two separate documents being fused to form the biblical flood record. Supposed early and late words have been held in the past to point to early and late documents in the Bible, but when objective factual light is brought to bear, as the discovery of the two words for "I" in the Ras Shamra Tablets from the period of 1400 B. C., we see that a convenient theory has to give way to potent fact.

Nor is the sacrificial system a late development, as shown by the Ras Shamra Tablets. Judges is acknowledged in the light of topographical and archaeological light to reflect "remarkable accuracy," and Daniel's Belshazzar in the light of the archaeological discoveries is no longer an unhistorical person and an item of evidence for dating the book late.

Archaeological discoveries do not support the idea of late material in the last twelve chapters of Joshua, to be assigned to a late writer designated by "P." The word "javelin" (sword, Joel 2:8) is not a late word supporting the late dating of Joel. Rather it is early, as shown by the

Ras Shamra Tablets, and the internal evidence of both Psalms and Job show, in the light of archaeology, reason for the long-accepted early dates for both. The chronicler knew whereof he spoke in referring to the drachma, a Greek coin, and the Aramaic of Ezra is not late, as shown by the Elephantine Papyri, but is contemporary with the century of Ezra.

In conclusion, we see that rationalistic higher criticism, far from maintaining itself in a lofty position on an untouchable pedestal, finds itself not only modified at almost every point but definitely weighed in the balance and found wanting in respect to many of its most crucial tenets.

Archaeology and the Study of the Biblical Text. At times Biblical students are puzzled when seeking to get the exact meaning of a Biblical text. In the account of the childhood of Samuel, the Bible records that when Hannah brought Samuel to the tabernacle, she also brought three bullocks, or as the Hebrew text read originally, "bullock three." Then, we are told, she offered a bullock; here the Hebrew text actually reads, "the bullock." The words, "the bullock" imply that she brought one bullock. Is one to explain the passage as indicating that she brought one or three? Specific light from the ancient Assyrian clay tablets, excavated in Iraq, which show that in referring to the age of animals, the number follows the name of the animal and the word "year" is understood but not written. Thus the phrase "bullock three" is an elliptical expression for the fuller phrase "a bullock of three years." In the light of the archaeological evidence, Hannah did not bring three bullocks and then offer "the bullock," but she brought one bullock of three years and sacrificed the bullock. Light on word construction, vocabulary, and many other phases of the biblical text has come from the ancient clay tablets, which for the most part are written in Semitic languages related to the Biblical Hebrew.

Archaeology and the Appreciation of the Ancient World. In earlier years, scholars could sit at their desks in London or Philadelphia or anywhere in the world and imagine what life was like in Bible times.

Today, thanks to archaeology, we no longer imagine--we can reconstruct much of ancient life. For example, nearly 300 years ago (850 B. C.) from the days of Elijah: Houses in that day often had two stories, and underground drains kept the interior of the city relatively dry. The houses were provided with plaster-lined cisterns (this is especially shown by excavations at Dothan), and Israelite women no longer needed to depend on water from the nearest spring.

The workman had iron tools of every kind--iron axes and adzes to cut trees, thin iron saws set in frames; sledge hammers as well as chisels and gouges. The farmer had iron sickles to harvest his grain. With the potter's wheel, which had already been in use for nearly 2000 years, there developed a type of mass-production in turning out a great deal of everyday pottery which was functional, rather than decorative as it had been in earlier centuries. Jewelry, cosmetic palettes, pendants of bone and ivory appear in every excavation of this period. Clothing, as pictured in the Assyrian monuments depicting Israelites, consisted of long fringed mantles, while on their feet they wore high boots turned up at the toes. Every phase of ancient life is illuminated by archaeological discoveries.³

³W. F. Albright, "The Time of Elijah," Archaeology of Palestine, and the Bible, Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1956, p. 53.

The remainder of this paper is a presentation in a brief and sketchy way of what archaeological findings have shed light on the main periods of Biblical history.

A. The Early Chapters of Genesis.

Creation Tablets. (Genesis 1 and 2). Archaeological excavation in the region of ancient Mesopotamia in the 19th century brought forth tablets which give the text of the so-called Babylonian Creation Account. It tells of a plot of the gods of the lower world led by the goddess Tiamat against the great gods of Babylonia. The great gods chose a champion, Marduk, who fought against Tiamat, and cut her in half, using one half to form the heavens. Imbedded within this myth is a reference to the creation of man and the world. It is not primarily a pagan account of creation, but rather an epic in praise of Marduk, as pointed out by the late Professor Heidel at the University of Chicago.⁴ The majesty and authority of the biblical record of creation stands in sharp contrast to the polytheism and crassness of the Marduk-Tiamat myth in the Babylonian account. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Frederich Delitzsch of Berlin set forth the radical idea that much of the early part of Genesis was a reworking and "Purifying" of Babylonian myths and legends. At first glance the Hebrew word for deep, tehom, does bear a resemblance to the name Tiamat, the Babylonian goddess. A careful examination of the two words, however shows that the word tehom cannot be derived from the Babylonian word Tiamat. A significant analysis of the question was given by Heidel in his Babylonian Genesis.

⁴Alexander Heidel, Babylonian Genesis. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, p. 245.

He concluded: "To derive tehom from tiamat is grammatically impossible because the former has a masculine, the latter a feminine ending. Moreover, it would have no h..."⁵

Archaeology and Eden. (Genesis 1 and 2). The clay tablets and inscriptions of ancient Mesopotamia tell of an early sacred garden in which there was a tree of life. This sacred tree appears often on the seals of important people of ancient Babylonia, as well as in the reliefs on decoration of the palaces.⁶

The Fall of Man. (Genesis 3). The story of Adapa, on ancient Babylonian tablets, tells that Adapa was brought before the gods because he broke the wing of the south wind. Food was placed before him, but he did not eat it and failed to gain eternal life.⁷ In both the Biblical record and the Adapa story, eating is involved in relation to eternal life. One must leave open the question whether this is a coincidental parallel or whether the Adapa story does represent a handing down of some knowledge of the events in Eden.

The Flood. (Genesis 6 - 8). One of the striking archaeological discoveries of the last century was that of the Babylonian tablets giving the account of a great flood. The text of these tablets appears

⁵Ibid., p. 85.

⁶Ira Maurice Price, The Monuments and the Old Testament, Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1958, p. 111.

⁷Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, edited by James B. Pritchard, Princeton University Press, 1955, pp. 101-102.

to date back to the early second millennium B. C. and is paralleled by fragments even earlier. It tells that the great god Ea warned a man named Utnapishtim: "Build a ship...aboard the ship take thou the seed of all living things."⁸ The flood waters came upon the land, then subsided, and the craft landed on a mountain. A dove was sent forth, then a swallow, and finally a raven. The many parallels between the biblical account and the Babylonian are evidence of an early knowledge of the flood. Throughout the world are records, traditions, and legends of a great flood. According to Johannes Riehm, there are a total of 268, all implying a universal knowledge of a great flood.⁹

The Table of the Nations. (Genesis 10). Many of the names of peoples and countries given in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 were unknown outside of the Bible until discovered in the archaeological monuments. These would include Ashkenaz, the Ashkunuz of the monuments; Togarmah-Tegarama; Elishah-Alashi; Tarshish-Tarsisi; Accad-Akkadu, and others. W. F. Albright commented: "The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document."¹⁰

B. The Patriarchal Period

Patriarchal Palestine. Archaeological documents give us a graphic picture of Palestine in the early second millennium B. C. Shortly after

⁸Ibid., p. 93.

⁹The Living Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 2, p. 159, New York: H.S. Stuttman Co., Inc., 1968.

¹⁰"Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," supplement to Young's Concordance, published separately by The Biblical Colloquium, 1955, p. 71.

2000 B.C., an Egyptian nobleman named Sinuhe fled from Egypt, because of the political situation, and came to Canaan, where he lived for an extended period. He tells that it was "a goodly land...there were figs in it and vines...copious was its honey, plenteous its oil; all fruits were upon its trees. Barley was there and spelt!"¹¹

The Battle of the Kings. (Genesis 14). In earlier years the record of the invasion of the four kings in the days of Abraham was rejected as unhistorical by many critics. The discovery in the archaeological records of names paralleling Arioch (Eri-aku) and Tidal, the two words forming Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14:1), has taken the account out of the realm of legend. The very term for "retainers" (Genesis 14:14) is found in a cuneiform tablet from 15th century Palestine.¹² Evidence of extended travel, as implied in this expedition, and the discovery of some of the very place names in Palestine (such as Ham, Genesis 14) show the historical background of the account. "Such early accounts can no longer be regarded as mythical or prehistoric."¹³

The Nuzi Tablets and the Patriarchal Accounts. (Genesis 15:35). A whole series of events in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has become clearer as a result of the discovery of the Nuzi Tablets from ancient Assyria, datable to the 15th century B.C. These tablets show

¹¹Price, op. cit., p. 148.

¹²Albright, op. cit., p. 76.

¹³Price, op. cit., p. 145.

the practice of adopting a son in patriarchal times, if one had no natural son. This clarifies the relationship between Abraham and Eliezer and explains Abraham's statement: "One born in my house is my heir" (Genesis 15:13).

When Isaac blessed Jacob, thinking it was Esau, it might be expected that upon discovery of the deception, he would merely repeat the blessing and apply it to Esau. But this he did not do. Light on the question also came from the Nuzi Tablets, which show the binding nature of an oral promise, and that it had validity even in a law court. This is demonstrated in the case of a young man named Tarmiya, recorded in the Nuzi Tablets, who sought to marry a young woman, Zululishtar. His brothers, however, tried to prevent him. Tarmiya won legal permission in the law court case which followed, by invoking his father's oral promise that he could take Zululishtar to wife.

Rachel's theft of the family images (Genesis 31:19) and Laban's great concern to recover them has puzzled Bible commentators. The Nuzi Tablets show that the possession of the family images indicated right of inheritance. Laban did not want Jacob to inherit his estate. I chose only to use these examples but many other aspects of customs and practices in the patriarchal period are graphically illuminated by the Nuzi Tablets.

C. Egypt and the Wilderness

Joseph in Egypt. The turning point in Joseph's career came when he went to Dothan in northern Palestine to find his brothers. The site

of this ancient city has been excavated in a series of campaigns by Albright, Mrs. Free and their excavation staffs. These discoveries show that it was a thriving city in the days of Joseph (Genesis 37:17) and in the time of Elisha (c. 850 B.C.; II Kings 6:13), the two periods in which it is mentioned in the Biblical narrative. Sold by his brothers to a passing camel caravan of traders, he was brought to Egypt, where the background of his life is abundantly illuminated by Egyptian archaeological discoveries.

It has been objected that a Hebrew slave could never rise to power in a powerful foreign state. Archaeological discoveries show, on the contrary, that a Canaanite by the name of Dudu rose to high favor in the Egyptian court; another Canaanite, Meri-Ra, became armor-bearer to Pharaoh; and Yankhamu, also a Canaanite, acted as deputy for Pharaoh of Egypt in the grain growing district of Egypt.¹⁴

Joseph is designated as "Father to Pharaoh," "Lord of all his house," and "Ruler throughout all the land of Egypt".¹⁵ Egyptian archaeological texts illustrate the various governmental posts which Joseph likely held as the important official under the king.¹⁶

Some scholars have completely rejected the historicity of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt. This view, however, is contradicted by many lines of

¹⁴J. P. Free, Archaeology and Bible History, Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 5th edition, 1956, p. 77.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁶William A. Ward, "Egyptian Titles in Genesis 39-50," BS, January, 1957, pp. 40-59.

evidence, including the discovery that many Israelite names were of Egyptian origin. According to W. F. Albright instances of Israelite names include Moses, Hophni, Phinehas, perhaps Merari, and others.¹⁷ More recent research has also made it possible to be reasonably confident of the location of many sites referred to in Exodus, including Ramses, Pithon, Succoth, and Baal-zephon.¹⁸

There are many bits of Egyptian coloring in the account of Joseph in Egypt which have been beautifully illustrated by Egyptian archaeological discoveries.¹⁹ R. H. Pfeiffer, late Professor of Old Testament at Harvard, acknowledges a definite knowledge of Egypt on the part of the author of the Pentateuch.

Exodus. It has already been noted at the beginning of this paper, that the discovery of the Ras Shamra Tablets have shown light on the probable date of the Song of Miriam. These tablets are evidence of a date close to the one believed of for the exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land, and is not evidence of a late date.

D. The Conquest and Judges

Evidence of the Conquest. A number of sites excavated in Palestine show evidence of violent destruction in the period between 1400 and 1200 B.C. They are very definitely to be connected with the conquest

¹⁷Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 78.

under Joshua and the further conquests in the period of the Judges. In this period, Bethel (Judges 1:22) was destroyed by a great fire which left a solid mass of burned brick.²⁰ At Lachish the burned remains of a city from the 13th century B.C. was discovered.²¹ At Kirjathsepher (Joshua 10:38; Judges 1:11-13), there is at the end of the Late Bronze Period (1600-1200 B.C.) a great burned layer and above it an Israelite city.²² At Hazor (Joshua 11:10-13), Garstang found evidence of destruction about 1400 B.C. and subsequent excavations by Yigael Yadin showed similar destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Period.²³

Jericho. Joshua 6. From 1930 to 1936 Jericho was excavated by John Garstang of the University of Liverpool. He found the fallen walls of Jericho and reported that they "fell outward so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins into the city."²⁴ Further excavation 1952-1958 by the British School of Archaeology found some Late Bronze Age pottery but not as much as they expected. Miss Kathleen Kenyon, the director, concluded that much of the city of Joshua's day had been eroded away. It should also be pointed out that Garstang had already dug there for seven years and had removed much of it.

²⁰ Jack Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, Princeton University Press, Second Edition, 1959, p. 160.

²¹ Ibid., p. 162.

²² Ibid., p. 163.

²³ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁴ John Garstang, Joshua-Judges, London: Constable, 1931, p. 146; cf. Free, op. cit., p. 130.

The Record of the Book of Judges. Some critical scholars have held that the book of Judges is made up of stories which were not written until about 55 B.C., more than half a millennium after the time portrayed in the accounts. John Garstang, however, in his book Joshua-Judges, points out: "We find no reason to doubt that the historical narrative contained in the books of Joshua and Judges, so far as it was derived from the old sources...was founded upon fact."²⁵ At many points archaeological evidence has been found which illuminates and confirms the book of Judges: (1) Names. Names in the book of Judges, such as Ahiman and Talmi (Judges 1:10), appear in the Ras Shamra Tablets, showing that these names fit into that early period.²⁶ (2) Cities. Jerusalem was not captured in this period according to Joshua and Judges. This is confirmed by the evidence of the Amarna Tablets, which show that the king of Jerusalem remained loyal to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Hazor's destruction is evidence in the archaeological discoveries.²⁷

E. The Monarchy

The Rise of the Monarchy in Israel. The archaeological monuments and records show that the two great powers on either side of Israel - Assyria and Egypt - were at a low ebb in the eleventh and tenth centuries B.C. (1100-900 B.C.), when the monarchy in Israel began and developed under Saul, David, and Solomon. God's sovereignty in restraining nations is here evidenced.

²⁵ Garstang, Ibid., p. 141.

²⁶ Free, op. cit., p. 141.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 142-145.

Light on the Reign of Saul. (c. 1025 B.C.). Saul ruled Israel from the town of Gibeah, about two miles north of Jerusalem. Excavations there by W. F. Albright revealed seven levels, from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 70. The fortress of the second town, with walls six feet thick and a massive stair case, is likely the castle of Saul. The archaeological evidence showed that it was destroyed shortly after his death.²⁸

The Period of David. (II Samuel; I Chronicles 11-29), (1010-971 B.C.). In the earlier years of the 20th century, critical theory denied to the age of David the musical development and musical organizations described in the Bible (I Chronicles 23:5-6). Archaeological discoveries show, on the contrary, that music was well developed long before the days of David.

Tomb paintings dated about 1900 B.C. show Asiatic Semites coming into Egypt, one carrying a lyre. Tomb paintings at Thebes (1400 B.C.) portray a girl with a lyre, another with an oboe. The name of David's guild musician, Calcol (I Chronicles 2:26) is paralleled on inscriptions on the Megiddo ivories, and Than and Haman (I Chronicles 2:6), in the Ras Shamra Tablets. W. F. Albright observes that such discoveries prove the correctness of the biblical indication of early musical guilds in the days of David.²⁹

Many Psalms attributable to David from their internal evidence have been dated hundreds of years later by critics of the 19th and 20th

²⁸Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research, No. 52.

²⁹W. F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, Baltimore: the John Hopkins Press, 1942, p. 127; cf. Free, op. cit., p. 151.

centuries. Archaeological discoveries throw specific light on several aspects of this problem: the spelling used in the Gezar Calendar and in contemporary archaeological inscriptions help us fix a date in the tenth century B.C. for Psalm 18.³⁰ Also, in the light of the Ras Shamra Tablets (Ugaritic Texts) many of the Psalms once downdated to the late period must be put back into early Israelite times, not later than the tenth century B.C. Albright comments, "There is no longer any reason to refuse a Davidic date for such Psalms."³¹

Details of David's reign are highlighted by archaeological discoveries. The low ebb of both Egypt and Assyria in the eleventh and tenth centuries B.C. explains why, under God's direction, the Kingdom could develop and expand. The power of the Philistines in the time of Saul and David is explained by the Egyptian monuments showing the attempt of the Philistines to enter Egypt. They were repulsed, then landed in Palestine to add to the troubles of Saul and David.

Solomon's Reign. (I Kings 1-11), (971-931 B.C.). Many details of Solomon's reign are illuminated by archaeological discoveries: (1) Solomon's Stables. (I Kings 9:19). Extensive stables dating to the tenth century B.C. and used by following generations were uncovered by the University of Chicago at Megiddo, a city specifically mentioned as the scene of Solomon's extensive building operations (I Kings 9:15).

³⁰Albright, Archaeology of Palestine, op. cit., p. 220.

³¹Ibid., p. 226-227.

One section uncovered would have housed nearly 500 horses; similar stables have been found at Hazor and Tell el Hesi. Some archaeologists have suggested that these stables date to the time of Ahab, rather than Solomon, and a similar view was set forth in the spring of 1960 by Yigael Yadin, Israelite archaeologist. However, as W. F. Albright observed in earlier years, the stables were built by Solomon, and used by succeeding generations down into the time of Ahab. (2) Trade Activities. Solomon's relations with the land of Sheba (I Kings 10:ff) are illuminated by discoveries showing that the latter country was a thriving kingdom earlier than had been previously supposed. Tarshish (I Kings 10:22) is now shown by archaeological inscriptions to be the Island of Sardinia, and Ophir is mentioned in an inscription from Tell Qasileh (near Jaffa and the modern city of Tel-Aviv).³² (3) Building Styles. While nothing remains of Solomon's temple, details of construction are illuminated by archaeological discoveries. The proto-Ionic or proto-Aeolic pilaster capital for columns was extensively used, as shown by archaeological discoveries at Megiddo, Samaria, Shechem in Moab, and near Jerusalem, dating from the tenth to the eighth centuries B. C. It was likely used in some of the Solomonic buildings.³³ (4) Solomon's Seaport. (I Kings 9:26). The biblical reference to Solomon's seaport on the Red Sea was strikingly illuminated by the excavation of

³²Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," op. cit., p. 93-94.

³³Ibid., p. 93.

Nelson Glueck (1938-40) which uncovered this important copper smelting center in the Solomonic period. Solomon's workmen utilized the principle of the forced draft in refining copper.³⁴

Over Forty Kings of Scripture. Earlier in the 20th century, Robert Dick Wilson pointed out that 41 kings of the Bible are to be found in the ancient archaeological records. Of these there are 26 foreign kings, including five kings of Egypt, five Assyrian kings, five Babylonian, and kings of several other countries. Six kings of Israel and four of Judah were found in archaeological inscriptions by Dr. Wilson, and since his death in 1930, the names of two more Judean kings have been discovered: Jehoiachin on tablets found near the Ishtar Gate in Babylon and brought to the attention of scholars in the early 1940's, and Ahaz on a carnelian seal published in 1940 by C. C. Torrey.³⁵ Wilson pointed out that these archaeological monuments containing the names of more than 40 biblical kings show that "the text of the proper names in the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy."³⁶

Rehoboam's Reign. The Bible records that shortly after the division of the kingdom, in the reign of Rehoboam, the Egyptian King Shishak invaded Palestine (I Kings 14:25). This is illuminated by the archaeological inscriptions on the walls of the temple of Karnak in southern

³⁴Free, op. cit., p. 171-172.

³⁵G. Ernest Wright, Biblical Archaeology, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957, p. 162.

³⁶Edward J. Young's revision of Robert Dick Wilson, A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament, Chicago: Moody Press, 1959, p. 71.

Egypt, which portray Shishak, tell of his invasion into Palestine, and enumerate 156 place names in Palestine which he claimed to have taken. These included Ajalon, Gaza, Gibeon, and Taanach.³⁷

Ahab (874-853 B.C.) and other kings of the Northern Kingdom. Ahab is listed in the Assyrian royal inscriptions as one of those combating Shalmaneser III of Assyria. The archaeological monument known as the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser records and portrays the tribute paid to the same king by Jehu a few years later. The invasion of Moab in the days of Omri and Ahab is illuminated by the Moabite stone, which gives details paralleling the record in II Kings 3-4-7. In another inscription Tiglath-pileser refers to the payment of tribute by Menahem. In inscriptions written by the scribes of Sargon II, he tells of the capture of Samaria and the carrying away of 27,290 Israelite captives. Some of the captives, as recorded in II Kings 17:6, were settled in the valley of the Habor, the river of Gozan. Excavation by von Oppenheim at Halaf in northern Mesopotamia established the location of Gozan, the capital of the upper Khabur district.³⁸

Light on Samaria and the end of the Northern Kingdom. The excavation of Samaria by Harvard University revealed the buildings of the days of Omri and Ahab (ninth century B.C.). In the level following their time, nearly 70 ostraca (potsherds bearing writing) were found listing payments

³⁷Price, op. cit., p. 233.

³⁸Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," op. cit., p. 95.

of oil and wine as revenue or taxes sent to the storerooms of the royal palace.³⁹ Many of the names on these ostraca are formed with the word Baal--Abi-baal, Meri-baal--, giving archaeological light on the impact of Baal worship, as implied in the Bible (I Kings 16:31-32). Baal worship had made such inroads that people were giving names to their children which included the name Baal. The Samaria excavations also brought forth many ivory plaques, panels, small boxes, and furniture decorations, confirming the biblical reference to Ahab's "ivory house" (I Kings 22:39). The fall of Samaria (722-21 B.C.) is described in the archaeological records of Sargon, king of Samaria, and the biblical record is given in II Kings 17:5-6.

The Last Days of the Southern Kingdom. (II Kings 22-25; II Chronicles 34-36; Jeremiah); (640-586 B.C.). Striking archaeological light on the last days of the Southern Kingdom (just before and after 600 B.C.) came in the discovery of a group of clay tablets found near the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. These tablets record the rations given by the king of Babylon to the captive King Jehoiachin, confirming the biblical record that Jehoiachin, the next to the last king of Judah, was taken captive by the Babylonians and later given a daily allowance by the Babylonian king (II Kings 25:27-30). As the Babylonian king's army closed in on the Kingdom of Judah in the period of 588-87 B.C., the Bible indicates that the cities of Lachish and Azelah had not yet fallen

³⁹Free, op. cit., p. 182-183.

(Jeremiah 34:7). Most significant archaeological light on these two cities comes from the discovery in the excavation at Lachish of ostraca which proved to be military dispatches. One of these letters (No. 4), written by the army officer at a military outpost to his superior officer at Lachish, says, "We are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah." This letter not only shows that the Babylonian army of Nebuchanezzar was tightening its net around the land of Judah, but mentions the very two cities, Azekah and Lachish, which the Bible indicates fell at the end of the war, shortly before Jerusalem. Much other important light is brought to bear on this period by the Lachish Letters.⁴⁰

F. The Exile and Return from Captivity

The Desolation of Palestine in the Days of the Exile. (6th century B.C.). The biblical record of the destruction of many towns (Jeremiah 34:7) at the beginning of the Exile and the desolation of Jerusalem and much of the land (II Kings 25:10-12) has been doubted by some scholars. C. C. Torrey of Yale considered the account of the restoration given in Ezra as "quite apocryphal".⁴¹ The excavations have shown, on the contrary, that many of the cities of Judah were destroyed and not rebuilt, and others were destroyed and reoccupied after a long period of abandonment. There is not a single known case where a town of Judah itself was occupied continuously throughout the period of the Exile.⁴² This

⁴⁰Free, ibid., pp. 579-600.

⁴¹Albright, Archaeology of Palestine, op. cit., p. 141.

⁴²Ibid., p. 142.

strikingly illustrates the Biblical indication of the desolation of the land, and fails to support Torrey's theory that the biblical writers exaggerated the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's army.

Evidence of the Exiles in Babylonia and Egypt. Archaeological evidence of the Jews who were taken to Babylonia (II Kings 25:11) was found in tablets excavated at Nippur, which come from this period and contain many typically Jewish names. In Egypt, the Elephantine Papyri, found on an island in the Nile, gives us light on the Jews living there who stemmed from the group that went down at the beginning of the Exile in the days of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 43:6-7). These papyrus letters were actually written by these Jews in the fifth century B.C.⁴³

The Edict of Cyrus and the Return from Exile. The Bible records that when King Cyrus gained control of Babylon (539 B.C.), he allowed the Jews to return to their native land (Ezra 1:1-4). Archaeological light on this action of Cyrus came in the discovery of a clay cylinder on which Cyrus' edict is recorded concerning his sending displaced and captive people back to their original homes: "I gathered together all their populations and restored them to their dwelling places."⁴⁴

⁴³Free, op. cit., p. 231.

⁴⁴Price, op. cit., p. 314; cf. Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by Pritchard, p. 316.

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