

# **Light From the Dust Heaps**

Recent Discoveries Confirm the Bible

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## Preface

BIBLICAL archeology is a young but important science. Born only a little more than a century and a half ago, it has achieved a definite place among other and much older sciences. Hundreds of scholars engaged in this field of scientific endeavor have labored either in the ruined sites of the Orient or at their desks in institutions of learning in the Old and New worlds. They have dug up ruins and tombs, deciphered dead languages and scripts, copied innumerable ancient texts, and written thousands of books and articles setting forth the results of their archeological work in Bible lands—most of it in a scholarly and highly technical language.

Many endeavors have also been made to interpret this work for readers who are not trained in the field of archeology or Oriental languages, but who are nevertheless deeply interested in the ancient world. To these belong all sincere students of the Bible who are eager to gain a better understanding of this wonderful book. Since the Bible was written by Oriental authors in languages of the ancient world, and describes events that took place in the ancient Orient, a knowledge of the history, culture, and religions of the ancient Oriental nations is of inestimable value for a fuller understanding of the Bible. Hence, discoveries made in Bible lands cannot be ignored by those interested in ancient history or in the Bible and its story.

The present little book is a modest effort to depict for the reader of the Bible, interested in its teachings and historical records, some of the results of archeological research in Bible lands. It is neither exhaustive in its treatment of the history of Biblical archeology nor comprehensive in its discussion of archeological evidence shedding light on Bible subjects. Such a treatment would fill a much larger book. The only purpose of this little work is to show how manifold has been the help the student of the Bible has received from the monuments of Egypt, the ruined heaps of Mesopotamia, and the desert caves of Palestine, and how recent discoveries in those countries have proved that the Bible contains the records of the past. Seeing his confidence in the Bible confirmed, the reader then will not only appreciate much better its sublime truths but will also more willingly follow its teachings.

The history of Biblical archeology and the marvelous discoveries that have made the ancient world live again before our eyes is a most fascinating subject. It has thrilled the author from childhood, and has strengthened his faith in the accuracy and veracity of the Bible ever since he began to study this interesting material. This little book is sent out in the hope that it may buttress the faith of its readers in the eternal values of God's Word. THE AUTHOR.

## 1. An Age of Discoveries and Criticisms

DURING the Middle Ages people lived in a static civilization that had seen neither progress nor change for many centuries. However, a new era began in the fifteenth century, when discoveries and inventions were made and new concepts of spiritual values were found. The invention of movable type and the development of the printing press at the beginning of this new era were mainly responsible for the great changes that took place. News and the results of productive thinking could be disseminated very quickly and over vast areas with comparatively little effort. The discovery of new continents in east and west, opening up new areas for expansion, gave to many people a new outlook on life and widened the horizon of those progressive individuals who were dissatisfied with the narrow way in which Europe had been living for many centuries. This new mentality resulted also in a revolution against the degenerated church of the Middle Ages and its rule over the human spirit.

Humanism in the field of intellectual studies, the Renaissance in the sphere of art, and the Reformation in the world of religion were the great accomplishments that ushered in a new age and a new way of life. Progress was made in many respects when nations threw off the gloomy shackles of medievalism, spiritual tyranny, and political despotism. Many and rich have been the material, cultural, and religious accomplishments of the last five centuries, and especially of the last two. With an extraordinary pace discoveries have been made, new regions of this globe have been explored, the highest mountains have been scaled, and unknown laws of nature have become known and made subservient to man's needs.

The result of all this progress during the last two centuries has been a tremendous change in the

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way of life on every side. Modes of transportation have been fantastically altered. While people traveled on horseback or in animal-drawn vehicles for many ages, human beings are now traveling on land, in the air, on the sea, and below the surface of the water in machines that outstrip the fastest birds, animals, and fish in speed. Ways of communication have been revolutionized as well as the science of preserving and lengthening life; but unfortunately the means of mass destruction have also been developed.

This rise of new-found concepts and an increased knowledge have made man inquisitive not only in the field of science and technique but also in that of religion. He has found out that not all concepts considered by his forefathers to be truths actually proved to be sound when investigated by modern standards. The change in values of many material aspects of life has had its great impact on spiritual and intellectual values, especially in the realm of religion, philosophy, and history.

All Christians had for many centuries shown an implicit faith in the statements of the Bible. They did not profess to understand all that its sacred pages contained, but they did not question its authenticity, and accepted its records and stories as true. Our forefathers reconstructed the early history of this world on the evidence presented in the historical books of the Bible and aided their understanding of the ancient world by means of the writings of classical authors. Hence, besides the Bible, the works of the Jewish historian Josephus, the writings of Herodotus and Xenophon, and other classics were in the possession of every educated man.

With the re-evaluation of many criteria of science, geography, or astronomy that this world has witnessed during the last few centuries, questions came up concerning records dealing with ancient history and religion accepted by our forefathers. Seeing that many formerly held views were in need of correction, the modern inquisitive mind naturally began to question the correctness of earlier views about ancient history.

Therefore the works of classical authors were put under the microscope of reasoning and critical investigation, and it was discovered that much of what they had said could not stand this test and had to be put aside as unreliable. Hence it was thought that Biblical writings had to be put on the same level, and measured by the standards used for extra-Biblical literature.

This new trend of critically investigating the historical records of the Bible was born in the second half of the eighteenth century, and has been with us to the present time. Its work, called literary criticism, or higher Bible criticism, was first applied to that book of the Bible that describes the earliest phases of the history of the world—the book Genesis. Later it was extended to other historical books, and finally to the prophetic writings and the wisdom literature of the Bible, so that by the end of the nineteenth century, when higher criticism gained its greatest triumphs, modern theologians and historians accepted very little of the Bible as genuine, or as reliable source material for a reconstruction of ancient history.

Critics have questioned and challenged many statements made by the authors of the Bible because their authenticity could not be proved by scientific means, and critically inclined scholars have analyzed the facts presented and the events described in the Scriptures on the basis of internal evidence. Reasoning that some stories seem to be exaggerated, and that others cannot possibly have taken place as they are recorded and must be considered to have been distorted, each modern critic engaged in this work has rewritten Biblical history according to his concept and understanding.

Yet at approximately the same time a new science called Biblical archeology was born, and has been developed to a degree that it has greatly helped to nullify the disastrous effects of higher criticism. In the same way that every attack in nature results in the emergence of defensive forces, the attack on the reliability of the Word of God has caused forces to rise up to its defense.

Biblical archeology, closely connected with Near Eastern archeology in general, started about 150 years ago, when the investigations into the history of this world began in the lands where the earliest civilizations had flourished—the valley of the Nile and of the Euphrates and Tigris. Its visible ruins have been explored, and numerous cities, tombs, monuments, temples, and palaces, buried by the debris and sand of many centuries, have been unearthed. Strange scripts, used by the ancients, but forgotten for long ages, have been deciphered, and long-lost languages recovered. A great work of excavation and surface exploration has been carried on in peaceful competition by scholars belonging to many different countries.

This work has not been limited to the two most important countries of the ancient civilizations, Egypt and Mesopotamia, where the most spectacular discoveries have been made, but has been extended also to other lands that had peripheral importance in ancient times, like the lands of the Hittites, Syrians, Arabians, Nubians, and others, and last but not least, to Palestine, the most illustrious of all Bible lands. Many marvelous discoveries have been made. Yet, since no one had any experience in this work when it began, techniques and methods had to be developed and much work done before scholars learned to

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recognize the value of each discovery made. During the first hundred years of this new era of exploration, most of the work of the archeologist consisted in collecting material, and the efforts of integrating it into a harmonious historical picture were not always easy. It was only after many mistakes had been made and many wrong conclusions had been drawn that the material which has come to light from these ancient heaps of ruins could be intelligently interpreted and take its right place as source material for a correct reconstruction of ancient history.

Even though during the nineteenth century a number of great discoveries were made which showed that the claims of higher criticism were unfounded and that the historical statements of the Bible demanded a much greater respect than was given to them, it was not until the end of the first world war that Biblical archeology reached the degree of scientific maturity that has assured it a place beside other recognized sciences, and that has given assurance that discoveries were correctly interpreted. Hence, during the last 35 years more material has been discovered that has shed definite light on the Bible and vindicated its stories than was discovered during the previous 120 years. Each discovery made now that has any bearing on the Bible is of much greater value than the same find would have been fifty or seventy-five years ago.

The next two chapters contain a brief survey of the work of Biblical archeology up to the beginning of the first world war, when a definite break in this work occurred. The remainder of this book will deal with the great number of discoveries made or published during the last thirty-five years, since they have helped to defeat higher criticism in a remarkable way and are making their contribution every day to a better understanding of the Holy Scriptures and to a greater confidence in their eternal Values.

## **2. The Earliest Explorations in Bible Lands**

In Egypt

THE EXPLORATIONS of the Near East began in Egypt, the land that has fulfilled the dream of all archeologists, because it possesses a great number of impressive ruins above ground, and through its dry climate has preserved much of the ancient perishable material buried for many years. The countryside of Egypt is studded with pyramids, temples, obelisks, and other monuments; and the numerous tombs of kings, nobles, and common people have provided a great wealth of objects that illustrate the daily life of the ancient Egyptians. Since this life did not differ very much from that of Palestine, where very little perishable ancient material has survived the destructive forces of man and nature, objects found in Egypt are of immense value to illustrate the life of the ancients. One needs only to look into an illustrated Bible dictionary to see how many objects of daily life, warfare, and industry are depicted by examples coming from Egypt.

The age of excavations in Egypt began in 1798, when Napoleon started his ill fated Egyptian campaign. The French have always been much interested in studying the cultural, artistic, and historical remains of those countries with which they have had connections. Hence, Napoleon, following this praiseworthy French tradition, was accompanied by 120 artists and scholars who were commissioned to explore and describe the ancient ruins of Egypt. They did a marvelous job, and although as the result of the fortunes of war they had to surrender to the British all the collections of objects gathered during their years of activity, their scientific work was not lost, but published in thirty-six large tomes entitled *Description de Egypt*.

It was one of Napoleon's officers who in 1799 found the famous Rosetta Stone, now in the British Museum, which has become one of the most illustrious of all Egyptian discoveries, not because of its contents or the historical information it imparts, but because it has become the key for the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. The language of Egypt had been dead for many centuries and its script had been unintelligible to every living soul on earth for almost two millenniums.

The Rosetta Stone, containing a decree issued in honor of Ptolemy V in 196 BC, is inscribed in three languages and scripts: (1) hieroglyphic Egyptian, the most ancient form of script used in Egypt. (2) Demotic Egyptian, the people's script that came into use several centuries before the Christian Era. And (3) Greek. After this stone had become known and its hieroglyphics had been published, scholars in different countries worked on their decipherment. Several attempts were made by different men, but they did not go

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beyond the correct decipherment of a few signs. It was Jean Francois Champollion (1790-1832) who revealed to an astonished scholarly world in 1822 that he had succeeded in deciphering the script of the ancient Egyptians.

Scores of Egyptologists have continued his work, and complete grammars and dictionaries of the Egyptian language are now available, so that any ancient Egyptian text can be read without great difficulty. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made since Champollion's untimely death in 1832, to him belongs the honor of having laid a solid foundation for the science of Egyptology and of having opened for historical and Biblical research a vast field of untapped sources that has revolutionized the understanding of Egyptian history during the last hundred years. Documents have thus become available for study which contain historical records, letters, religious texts, pieces of literature, and documents of daily life.

Only through the decipherment of the Egyptian scripts and the rediscovery of its language is an intelligent understanding of the monuments of the Nile country possible. All Egyptian buildings contain numerous inscriptions. In fact, the walls of some of the temples and tombs are completely covered with texts, paintings, or sculptured reliefs describing in word and picture the ancients' life and history. All this evidence was entirely unintelligible before the decipherment of ancient Egyptian.

After the work of decipherment had been accomplished, the exploration of the many ruins above ground was begun in earnest. Great expeditions worked in Egypt for years, and published accounts of their work as well as copies of many texts found. The reports of these expeditions aroused great interest in the marvelous ancient civilization of the Nile country, and numerous expeditions were sent out to obtain some of these antiquities for the museums of Europe and America. Excavations were begun in many places, but for a long time archeologists looked only for museum pieces pleasing to the eye, and much material that had great scientific but little artistic value was neglected. Nevertheless, the tremendous amount of material which during the first period of exploration came into the hands of the scholars and which has filled many museum galleries in Europe and America has furnished the material for a reconstruction of Egypt's checkered history, for an appreciation of its civilization, and for a better knowledge of its religion and culture.

### In Mesopotamia

Also in Mesopotamia the era of exploration started in earnest with the decipherment of its ancient scripts and a rediscovery of its languages. Some copies of inscriptions written in wedge-shaped signs, called cuneiform, had been transcribed by travelers during the eighteenth century at different places in the Near East, and their publication had aroused some interest among scholars. Some attempts to decipher texts written in Persian cuneiform, one of the simplest of all cuneiform systems used in ancient times, were made, but it took a genius to accomplish a complete decipherment. This genius was Henry Rawlinson, who succeeded in this work with the help of the great Behistun inscription.

This great Englishman had been sent to India as an officer of the East India Company, and on his way through Persia had passed the rock of Behistun with its threefold inscription and relief of King Darius I. Its mysteries fascinated him to such an extent that he returned to it, and did not rest until he had secured complete copies of its text. In constant danger of losing limb and life, he scaled the steep rock and single handedly made copies of the different inscriptions. Having done this, he began the work of deciphering the old Persian inscription, the simplest. When this was accomplished he also deciphered the much more difficult Babylonian inscription, and finally its Elamite equivalent.

Although progress has been made in the realm of cuneiform studies by many other scholars since the first decipherment was accomplished, undivided praise for having done the major work must be given to Rawlinson. That a man could have succeeded in reading the strange scripts of the people of the ancient East seemed so incredible to many learned men of that time that they refused to believe Rawlinson's claims, and thought that he and his disciples had become victims of self-deception. Finally these scholars suggested that they decipher independently a text that had not been seen by any one of them, and thus convince the rest of the world of the soundness of their method.

This suggestion was accepted, and a new text, just come to light, was copied and the copies sent to Rawlinson and three other cuneiformists. When these men sent in their sealed decipherments, and their translations were read in a memorable meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1857, it appeared that they were all very similar, differing only in small details. Hence it became clear that the script and language of the ancient Mesopotamians had surrendered their secrets to modern scholarship. Although other cuneiform scripts like Hittite and Ugaritic have since that time been deciphered, no accomplishment has ever been greater in this field than the decipherment by Rawlinson of the Persian, BabyIonian, and Elamite cuneiform

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scripts.

Hand in hand with this work, excavations in the ruined mounds of the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris were carried on. In 1840 the French consul of Mosul, Emil Botta, put his spade in the ruined mound of Kouyunjile on the left bank of the Tigris opposite modern Mosul, where large mounds showed that an ancient city of tremendous size was buried. Since this work did not bring to light anything spectacular, he shifted his interest to Khorsabad, some fifteen miles northeast, where already numerous interesting objects had been found by the villagers living at that site. At Khorsabad, Botta discovered a large palace of Sargon II. Before his astonished eyes appeared large sculptured slabs of stone that once had covered the walls of the royal palace, and many other most interesting objects of the ancient Assyrians' life.

Very soon Henry Layard, a young Englishman, followed Botta in this archeological work by excavating Nimrud, which later proved to be Biblical Calah (Genesis 10:11). Botta as well as Layard did not know the names of -the ancient sites they were uncovering. Both thought they had found ancient Nineveh, and both were mistaken, since Nineveh was buried under the mounds of Kouyunjik and Nebi Yunus. Layard, like Botta, discovered several Assyrian palaces with numerous beautifully carved relief in stone. Also huge human-headed winged bulls, each weighing more than forty tons, came to light, which had formerly guarded the gates of palaces, temples, and city walls. Many of these relics were transported to Europe and found their way into different collections, opening up before the astonished eyes of modern men the unknown world of the dim past. The result of these sensational discoveries, followed by many others, was a new and great interest in the civilizations and history of the ancients, and one expedition after another was sent to the countries of the Near East to bring its secrets to light.

It would lead too far to follow the many explorers through the ruined sites of Mesopotamia and describe the numerous and valuable discoveries made by digging into the formless heaps of sand and debris in the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris. As in Egypt, so also in Mesopotamia, the early excavators were mostly interested in objects of artistic value, which pleased the eye of the public. Little attention was paid to objects that could not be used as showpieces in a museum, so that all interest was centered on inscriptions, clay tablets, sculptures, or other pieces of art. Many thousands of these came to light in legitimate excavations, but also during illicit diggings carried out by natives, who had quickly found out that the discovery of antiquities proved to be a good source of income. Hence, they dug into the ancient mounds that stud the countryside of Mesopotamia, and brought to light tremendous amounts of ancient material which was sold to the agents of European and American museums. That many precious objects were lost or destroyed in this unscientific way of digging can easily be understood.

This was the heroic age of excavations, when the science of Biblical archeology was still in its infancy. Archeologists frequently did not know the significance of their discoveries and experienced new surprises practically every day. Scientific methods of excavation had not yet been developed, and the interpretation of ancient objects was more or less guesswork. The formless remains of old walls, to mention one example, usually built of sun-dried bricks, made little sense to the inexperienced archeologist, and were of so little interest that their detailed study was usually neglected.

The discoveries that were of primary interest to the student of the Bible, made during the first half century of excavations in the Bible lands, were texts or pictorial illustrations of scenes described in the Old Testament. One such early discovery was a text mentioning the Assyrian king Sargon. It proved the existence of this monarch, whose name is found in the book of Isaiah (Chapter 20:1), but nowhere else in ancient literature, with the result that critics had doubted his existence. His rediscovery was the first triumph of Biblical archeology.

A royal archive of King Ashurbanipal, found in a palace at Nineveh, contained thousands of official documents written on clay tablets. Among them were religious texts such as hymns, prayers, epics; also letters, grammatical texts, building inscriptions, and records of military campaigns carried out by Assyrian conquerors against different nations, among which were the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In this way the names of Hebrew kings from (the time of Ahab down to Manasseh appeared on numerous inscriptions and elucidated the Bible stories of the time.

Other documents from that same library showed that the ancients possessed a tradition about the creation of the world that contained many similarities with the Biblical record of creation, showing that some true reminiscences of that event were retained among the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians. A much greater similarity, however, was found between the story of the Biblical flood and the Babylonian flood story, of which the first text came to light in 1872. In this case very close parallels were found, showing that the writer of the cuneiform record of the Flood had some true knowledge of that great catastrophe that had destroyed almost all mankind.

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Objects of great interest to the reader of the Bible were also found during the early excavations in Assyria. To these belong some reliefs discovered at Nineveh that depict the siege and fall of Lachish in Palestine during King Hezekiah's reign, giving pictorial evidence of an event described also in the Bible (2 Kings 18:17; 19:8). Then there was found by Layard a black stone obelisk that shows King Jehu of Israel kneeling before the Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser III, and offering him his submission, while a number of Israelites are represented as carrying the tribute to be given to the Assyrian ruler.

These and other discoveries, with their direct bearing on Bible stories, aroused keen interest and great enthusiasm among Christians who had held fast to their faith in the accuracy of the Bible in a time when the very foundations of that faith seemed to be taken away by the higher critics. These discoveries showed for the first time that historical events described in the sacred pages of Holy Writ could be proved by contemporary records of other nations. One needs only to leaf through the old volumes of religious periodicals that appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century to see how great was the influence these discoveries had on a more confident reliance on Bible stories of the Old Testament. Yet this heroic period of unscientific explorations in Bible lands was just the beginning of much greater things to come.

### 3. Biblical Archeology Put on a Scientific Basis

THE FIRST fifty years of Near Eastern archeology can be compared to a treasure hunt. Every archeologist was out to find objects of art and written documents suitable for exhibition in museums, with the aim of inducing wealthy people and institutions to provide money for further field work. Excavations in which such discoveries were not made were hardly considered worth recording, nor the objects found worth rescuing, and much scientific material that could have provided valuable evidence for the reconstruction of some important phases of history was irretrievably lost in this way.

Looking in retrospect over the first period of Near Eastern Archeology and its accomplishments, one has to admit that it was a blessing that the tomb of Tutankhamen in Egypt and the royal tombs of Ur in Mesopotamia were not found fifty years before their actual discovery. Since these tombs contained many delicate, fragile, and perishable objects that needed expert handling and a complete mastery of the techniques of preserving such objects, much would have been lost if an earlier generation of scholars had found these priceless treasures.

In Egypt

In the 1880's a new wind began to blow in the field of Egyptian archeology. This was due partly to Gaston Maspero, the new head of the Department of Antiquities in Egypt, who actively promoted and encouraged archeological field work, and partly to Flinders Petrie, who introduced scientific methods in the field of archeology. This remarkable Englishman came to Egypt in 1880 as a young man, to re measure the great pyramid of Khufu at Giza, in order to refute the unfounded claims of the British Israelites. They had declared that pyramid to be a marvelous prophecy in stone, with its measurements having prophetic significance or symbolic meanings of time by which the great events of history up to the end of the world had been predicted. While working on the pyramid and for the first time scientifically surveying the most formidable stone structure of antiquity, Petrie became interested in the archeology of the Nile country, and began a life of excavations in the Orient, which did not end until he died in Jerusalem about sixty-two years later. Almost every year saw him and his fellow laborers working in some ancient site in Egypt or southern Palestine.

Petrie was a man who had come to the Near East not primarily to find treasures-although he probably found more treasures during his long career than any other excavator in Egypt-but to excavate and preserve for posterity whatever ancient Egypt had left for him to find. He saw value in every object. Broken pieces of pottery were just as carefully collected and recorded as statues or inscribed monuments, because he realized that they could provide valuable information to the expert in ancient ceramics. Petrie knew that potters have changed the form and artistic decorations of their products ever since pottery has been made, and that even broken vessels can provide indispensable information to the trained archeologist. He inaugurated methods of excavation with rigid standards of recording every find, even the most insignificant and apparently worthless object. Many successful archeologists of Egypt who subsequently did much to reconstruct that country's ancient history and culture were trained by Petrie, and everyone who has worked



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in the field of Egyptology owes him gratitude.

Yet Petrie, who was certainly the most original pioneer of scientific excavations in Egypt, was not the only one. A number of other successful excavators could be mentioned who developed and refined methods that, having been taken over by others, guarantee that every bit of evidence that comes to light is correctly understood and treated. George A. Reisner, of Harvard University, the German, Ludwig Borchardt, and a host of other archeologists did marvelous pioneer work during the years when scientific methods of archeology were developed. During this period, the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, Egyptian history was placed on a more secure foundation, and a better understanding of the cultural accomplishments of the ancient Egyptians was obtained.

It was during this period that some very important discoveries made in the field of Biblical archeology. Of these a few items mentioned here, while others will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Ranking first in importance among these discoveries is a complete royal archive—a collection of official documents consisting of hundreds of letters received by the Egyptian kings Imhotep III and IV from their Palestinian and Syrian vassals and other Asiatic kings. Found accidentally in 1887 at Tell el Amarna in central Egypt, they have received the name Amarna letters. An amazed scholarly world learned that the diplomatic language of the second millennium BC was Babylonian, and that the Babylonian cuneiform script was used in correspondence between the Egyptian king and Asiatic royalties.

The Amarna Letters not only have shed more light on the international conditions in a crucial time of the history of antiquity than any other single discovery, but have also illuminated the invasion of Canaan by the Hebrews under Joshua's leadership. Some of the letters were written by Abdu-Kheba, a king of Jerusalem, who pleaded for weapons and soldiers from Egypt to defend his city from the invading Hittites, in whom the Hebrews can easily be recognized. Hence, these documents tell the story of the conquest as the Canaanites saw it, and are extremely important for a reconstruction of the history of Israel's Settlement in Canaan.

In 1896 Flinders Petrie, while excavating in western Thebes, discovered a large stone monument of King Merneptah of the nineteenth century BC. In its inscription the name of Israel was found. The first, and so far only, occurrence of this name in hieroglyphics on any Egyptian monument.

Many other interesting discoveries were made during the nineteenth century that have shed light on the Bible or confirmed its sacred pages. To these belong the large relief of King Shishak on a temple wall of Karnak, commemorating his victory over Judah and Israel (1 Kings 14:25, 26). Of interest is also a wall painting discovered in the tomb of a nobleman of the patriarchal time, which depicts in color a group of Palestinians, men, women, and children. A most important discovery consisted of a large number of Jewish documents of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in which persons who are well known from the Bible play a significant role.

### In Mesopotamia

The history of archeology in the valley of the Euphrates and of the Tigris is similar to that of Egypt. If in the last-mentioned country Flinders Petrie had become the father of scientific explorations, in Mesopotamia it was Robert Koldewey who became the master of all methodically working archeologists. Having been trained in classical archeology of ancient Rome and Greece, he brought to Mesopotamia a rich experience when the German Orient Society made him director of the greatest single archeological enterprise ever carried out in the Near East—the excavation of Babylon.

Before him several excavators had made trial diggings in the vast area of that ancient metropolis, but had considered the job of excavating this tremendous site a hopeless task. Koldewey and his staff of trained architects, Assyriologists, and archeologists worked in Babylon without any break from 1899-1917. Koldewey himself took only two vacations during those eighteen years, and stopped the work neither during the hottest season of the year, when the temperature climbed to 120 degrees in when sandstorms or floods made working in the shade, nor formless heaps of rubble and debris very grueling. Yet during these years a method of excavation was developed that is still used by all modern archeologists in that country, although it has been refined in many ways.

Babylon proved to be a most difficult site, since it had been more thoroughly destroyed than any other ancient big city. Hence, these ruins would never have given up their secrets if they had not been investigated in the most thorough and scientific way. But under Koldewey's hands the ruins of Babylon became a mine of information for that city's ancient history, culture, and civilization. Another site in which these new methods were applied was Asshur, one of the ancient capitals of Assyria. Although Asshur did not yield so many museum pieces as Nineveh, Khorsahad, or Calah had done previously, the scientific

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results of that excavation outweighed those of the three others many times over.

During this first period of scientific excavation, which ended with the outbreak of World War I, tools were forged and working methods developed by means of which many unsolved archeological and historical problems have successfully been solved. That this later work has been most fruitful is shown in the next chapter. Although the excavations of Babylon and Asshur became masterpieces of scientific exploration, they were not the only sites in which excavations took place during the last few decades before World War I. Much fruitful work was carried out at other sites, and discoveries were made that have tremendously enriched our knowledge of the ancient nations of Mesopotamia. Of these only two will briefly be mentioned.

The French excavated Susa (Biblical Shushan) for many years and made some marvelous discoveries, of which the most sensational was the finding in the winter of 1901-1902 of the law code of Hammurabi, king of Babylon, now in the Louvre in Paris. Engraved on a big stone pillar, this legal monument had once been set up in the city of Babylon by the great king Hammurabi. However, the Elamites, after conquering Babylon at a later time, carried the monument off as spoil of war to their capital city Susa, where it was found by the modern excavators. In Susa was also uncovered the palace of the Persian kings, with whose description every Bible reader is familiar from the study of the book of Esther.

American archeologists at the same time (1889-1900) excavated Nippur, one of the oldest cultural cities in Lower Mesopotamia. They found many thousands of documents written in Ancient Sumerian, which preceded the language of the Babylonians and Assyrians. In Nippur so many inscribed clay tablets have come to light that generations of scholars have not been able to decipher and publish all the texts found at that site, and in the museums of Istanbul and Philadelphia new discoveries are still frequently made among the literary treasures that came from Nippur more than half a century ago.

### In Palestine

The reader may have wondered why nothing has been said so far of Palestine, although that country is the most important of all Bible lands. The Holy Land has few visible ruins and has always poorly rewarded the efforts of the archeologist who looked for museum pieces. Hence, hardly any archeological work was done in that country during the period when Near Eastern archeologists were engaged mainly in treasure hunting.

While spectacular discoveries were made in Mesopotamia and Egypt, every excavation in Palestine was extremely discouraging, because hardly any written material or objects of art were found, so that the archeologist neither understood his discoveries in the confusing ruins he excavated nor brought to light objects that could be considered desirable museum pieces.

Since Egypt and Mesopotamia seemed to be almost inexhaustible storehouses of ancient objects of art or historical documents, administrators of scientific institutions and museums considered it a waste of money to excavate in Palestine, which provided nothing that appealed to the eye. Such objects could be easily obtained in profuse numbers wherever the spade of the excavator was set in the soil of the Nile country or Mesopotamia. Hence, only a few insignificant attempts to clarify historical problems by excavations were made in the Holy Land before 1890.

When Flinders Petrie, who had already won his spurs as an archeologist in Egypt, was sent to the Holy Land by the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1890, he sensed the need of developing a method by which Palestinian archeology could produce results just as useful for an understanding of that country's ancient history as that of Egypt. During a short campaign at Tell el-Uesi in 1890, which lasted only a few weeks, he laid a firm foundation of scientific methods on which succeeding generations of scholars have built. However, the road to success in this most important of all Bible lands was more difficult than that in any other Near Eastern country, and Petrie's work was no more than pioneer's effort.

Palestine has a humid climate, and its soil has therefore preserved hardly any objects made of perishable material. Furthermore, ancient Palestine was always poorer than its neighboring countries, had less political power than they, and possessed neither large cities nor huge temples like those found in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Since it lay between two great empires, it was frequently overrun by armies from the southwest or the northeast, and consequently suffered more than any other Bible land from the effects of war. Its treasures were frequently carried away, and its cities more often destroyed than were those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, with the result that not much has been left for the modern archeologist.

Another reason for the nonexistence of certain objects, especially inscribed monuments, was the Hebrew religion. The second commandment of the Decalogue was understood to prohibit the erection of monuments in honor of kings or national heroes. In other countries such monuments provide important

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historical information to the historian, but none have so far been found in the land of the Israelites. The monotheistic Hebrew religion also condemned the production of divine images, which formed the main products of art among other nations. Although the Israelites did not always remain faithful to their religion, they frequently followed their pagan neighbors in their practices, reformers rose up from time to time, like Hezekiah, Josiah, the Maccabees, and others, who destroyed the images and monuments that had been set up in times of apostasy. These are some of the reasons why Palestine has left very little material comparable to the rich treasures of art and literature that have come to light in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Although Petrie laid a solid foundation of scientific explorations in 1890, it took a long time before his methods were sufficiently refined to guarantee that archeological work carried out in Palestine would have the same results as that done in other countries of the Near East. During the different archeological campaigns carried out before World War 1 at famous sites like Jerusalem, Gezer, Jericho, and others, much experience was gained in the work of solving the particular problems connected with Palestinian archeology. Mistakes were made, wrong conclusions were drawn, and the excavation reports of those early campaigns are obsolete now, and have no more than historical value. Nevertheless, the work of that period was not in vain, and later scholars have learned much from the mistakes of their predecessors, and have developed in Palestine methods of excavation that have reached the same level of perfection as those existing in more favorable countries of the Near East.

Although very few sites of Palestine have produced much inscriptional material, the results of modern excavations in Palestine are of equal value today, and just as instructive as those carried out in other Near Eastern countries, where every excavation campaign produces much documentary evidence.

What Palestine has actually furnished for a better understanding of the Bible will be discussed in the later chapters of this book.

### **4. Recent Explorations in Bible Lands**

THE MOST successful period of excavations in the Near East began after the end of World War 1. Up to that time most Bible lands belonged to the Turkish Empire. With its disintegration in 1918 an entirely different political situation was created. Most of these lands became mandate states under Western administrations until the time came when they obtained complete independence. With the introduction of Western administrative organizations, new policies for the exploration and preservation of antiquities were promoted. Favorable antiquity laws that guaranteed to scientific institutions a reasonable share in the finds, and an increased security in those countries, were responsible for an accelerated pace in the work of scientific explorations.

Many teams of archeologists have worked in the various countries around the eastern Mediterranean during the last thirty-five years. Sometimes more than a score of different expeditions were going at the same time at archeological sites, with the result that some of the greatest discoveries of all time in the field of Near Eastern archeology were made during these last few decades. The finding of royal tombs at Thebes and Ur was the most sensational of these discoveries. Every reader has heard about the discovery of the intact tomb of King Tutankhamen in 1922, contained an immense amount of treasure. Equally spectacular was the discovery, in 1927, of several royal tombs at Ur, at least five hundred years older than the tomb of King Tutankhamen. They also contained great treasures of art and utility, which have widened our understanding of the Mesopotamian culture of that time.

Many other sites, which did not provide spectacular discoveries in gold, silver, or precious stones, have been of even greater importance for the historian and Biblical scholar. The excavations of Mari, on the central Euphrates, where the great archives of royal correspondence of the patriarchal age came to light, revolutionized ancient Near Eastern chronology and were responsible for the fact that the dates of the early periods of Babylonian history were lowered by several centuries. Ras Shamrah, on the north Syrian coast, has provided a great amount of source material for a better understanding of the Canaanite culture and religion. Nuzi, in northern Assyria, has given us thousands of cuneiform tablets illustrating the customs of the patriarchal age, and Byblos, in Phoenicia, with its wealth of Phoenician alphabetic and Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions, has shed valuable light on the relations between Egypt and Asia.

These are only a few of the many places in which extremely important discoveries have been made, and this list could be extended indefinitely by describing the results of excavations carried out at Qatna, Kadesh, or Alalakh in Syria; Karatepe, Killtepe, and Bogazkoy in Anatolia. Warka, Eridu, Tell

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Harmal, and many other places in Mesopotamia, as well as Susa and Persepolis in Persia. Discoveries in these places as well as many sites in Egypt, to be discussed in succeeding chapters, have greatly increased the source material that has become available to the historian and the Biblical scholar for a reconstruction of ancient history and an elucidation of Bible stories.

Great archeological advances have been made in all Bible lands, yet the most phenomenal progress in the field of Biblical archeology during the past thirty-five years has taken place in Palestine. It has previously been stated that prior to World War I Palestine did not provide much material that was of great use to the Biblical scholar, because very few inscriptions had come to light, and the science of excavations had not then been developed to the stage where discoveries could be correctly identified and interpreted. This situation has been entirely changed in the meantime, because the science of dating occupation levels of ancient mounds has been perfected to such a degree that the historical or cultural value of almost every find that comes to light can now be ascertained, and its nature and meaning correctly explained.

For the information of the reader not familiar with Palestinian archeology it should be explained that ancient sites in Palestine were usually built on elevated points, and that a city, either having been destroyed, was built again upon its old ruins. When a city was demolished by war or forces of nature, the remaining population did not remove the debris of the destroyed dwellings, but leveled it off and built the new structures on top of the remaining wall stumps. This had the result that each occupation level rose in height in respect to the surrounding country until an artificial mound was created that became so high and so small at the top that its population finally abandoned it for another place.

These artificial mounds, called tells, stud the countryside of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia, and are easily recognizable by their peculiar form. When the archeologist cuts into such a tell from the top, its past history is laid open in perfect sequence. The top layers contain the latest occupation levels, which may belong to the Arab or Byzantine times. Below these, older levels are found, and the earliest are naturally at the bottom. A vertical tilt into such a mound shows the levels of occupation like the layers of a cake, so that a trained archeologist can recognize the different periods from the architectural peculiarities of the ruins and from the varying shapes of pottery vessels, household objects, weapons, and tools, as they come to light.

This work of scientific exploration begun in Palestine by Flinders Petrie in 1890, as already mentioned, was advanced by Fisher in their excavations of Samaria from 1908 to 1910, and perfected by the work of other scholars, among whom W. F. Albright occupies the first place. It would lead too far to describe the numerous expeditions that have worked in Palestine during the past thirty-five years, but it can be said that in practically every area of the Holy Land some explorations have taken place that added to our knowledge of the civilization of the Canaanites and Hebrews through valuable discoveries. The little capital city Gibeah of Saul has been partially laid bare, as well as Mizpah of Samuel's days, just north of it. Shiloh, where the ark was located for three centuries, was excavated, also Shechem, Lachish, Samaria, Megiddo, Jericho, Ai, Gezer, and a number of other places in the central part of Palestine, as well as some cities in the country of the Philistines, in Edom, and in Transjordan.

Although no sensational discoveries were made in any of these archeological campaigns to draw the attention of the public as did the golden treasures of the tomb of Tutankhamen, the constant stream of important objects that has come from these excavations has increased our source material for the illustration and vindication of Bible stories so much that we know infinitely more about the background of Bible times than the last generation of scholars. We now have a clear concept of the religious practices, cultural accomplishments, and material civilization during the different periods of Palestine's checkered history.

Although no single discovery has so far been made in Palestine that has in a revolutionary way increased our understanding of the ancient history of that country, or that could be called sensational, the many findings have brought to light much detailed evidence for a reconstruction of that history. This is also true with regard to other Bible lands. The increase of our knowledge of ancient history can be compared with the making of a mosaic. This consists of many stones, each one small and insignificant but different in shape and color. In the hand of the skilled artist these stones are arranged in such a way that they form a harmonious and beautiful picture. The trained archeologist, the scholar in Oriental languages, and the expert on ancient history are the artists who are recovering bits of evidence from the ruins of the Near East and putting them together into a harmonious whole. The picture is not yet complete, and there are still gaps in our knowledge, but great progress has been made, and is being made, in filling the gaps, to the delight of all those interested in this work.

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Before this survey of the recent history of Palestinian explorations is concluded, mention should be made of the most extraordinary discoveries ever brought to light in that country, discoveries that are of an entirely different nature from those previously made in the course of excavations. The finding of a great number of Hebrew Bible manuscripts in the desert of Judea since 1947, which originated in pre-Christian times and the first two centuries of the Christian Era. Although the discoveries made by the spade of the archeologist have corroborated certain phases of the Bible stories or shed light on Biblical history, these manuscripts, many centuries older than the earliest that were available before these great discoveries were made, have for the first time given us material by which it can be proved that the Bible text has been transmitted down through the centuries practically unchanged.

A description of these great finds and their impact on Biblical Studies of our time will be given in the concluding chapters of this book.

### 5. The Patriarchal Age in the Light of Archeology

THE STORIES of the patriarchs were a favorite hunting ground of critical scholars. They considered them unreliable and legendary, and could not see in the patriarchs men of real flesh and blood. This situation has changed considerably since the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi and the excavations of Mesopotamian cities such as Ur of the Chaldees and Nuzi of the Horites. Evidence found there shows that the social and cultural conditions of the first half of the second millennium BC were exactly those that are portrayed in the patriarchal stories of the Bible.

It is not necessary here to defend or condemn Abraham for marrying his slave and later sending her and the child away, nor is there a need in this book to approve or disapprove of the various activities of Isaac, Jacob, and other men of the patriarchal age. The aim of this study is to show that the recent discoveries have revealed in a most striking way that these men and women followed the practices and customs of their time. For instance, it was customary for a man to marry his slave girl when his wife was barren, and it was customary to let her mistress punish her if she became overbearing because of the honor she had received. The existence of such customs explains certain apparently strange events in Abraham's life (Genesis 16:1-6).

The many documents from Nuzi dealing with the social conditions of the patriarchal age have presented such striking parallels to Biblical stories of the early periods that some critical scholars have expressed their surprise concerning the accuracy of the picture of the patriarchal world we gain from the Bible. The following statement from the pen of one of the foremost living Orientalists, Professor W. F. Albright, may be quoted in this connection:

"Eminent names among the scholars can be cited for regarding every item of Genesis chapters 11-50 as reflecting late invention, or at least invention of events and conditions under the Monarchy into the remote past, about which nothing was thought to have been really known to the writers of later days.

"The archaeological discoveries of the past generation have changed all this. Aside from a few die-hards among older scholars, there is scarcely a single Biblical historian who has not been impressed by the rapid accumulation of data supporting the substantial historicity of patriarchal tradition. "-The Biblical Period" in *The Jews; Their History, Culture, and Religion*, ed. by Louis Finkelstein (New York, 1949), p. 3.

How such corroboration of Biblical stories have been accomplished can be shown by means of an example from Nuzi. A certain adoption contract informs us about the existing rules of adoption. A rich man by the name of Nashwi adopted a young man called Wullu. Provision was made that the adopted young man should marry the daughter, but he would have to support his foster father as long as he lived. After Nashwi's death Wullu would inherit the parental property, including the household gods, if no sons were born to Nashwi in the meantime. Should sons be born, the adopted son would share the property equally with the real sons, but the household gods would be retained by the sons.

Other texts from Nuzi tell us that the children of an adopted son who had married the daughter of the foster parent remained the children of their grandfather during his lifetime. If this situation is applied to Jacob and Laban, we find an almost complete harmony between these Biblical stories and the conditions as reflected in the Nuzi texts. Laban apparently had no sons when Jacob came into his family, and therefore adopted him. Jacob married Laban's daughters, but Jacob's sons remained his father-in-law's children as long as he lived (Genesis 31:28, 43). Later on, sons must have been born to Laban (Genesis 31:1), which development changed the legal situation for Jacob and his wives. Therefore they had no right to take the household gods of Laban when they left him, a fact that was recognized by Jacob as well as by Laban

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(Genesis 31:30-32).

It was also customary, according to the Nuzi text, to give a handmaid as part of the dowry to each daughter that was given in marriage, just as Jacob received a handmaid with each one of his wives as Laban's gift (Genesis 29:24, 29). Furthermore, a Nuzi text reveals how inheritance rights could be exchanged for sheep, just as Esau gave away his birthright for bread and a dish of lentils (Genesis 25:31-34). In this way cuneiform texts have thrown light on many Bible passages dealing with the patriarchal age, and have thus revealed how accurately the stories of the patriarchs fit into the period in which they lived. This led Alfred Jeremias, a scholar of the critical school, to make the following statement:

"We have shown how the milieu [the setting] of the stories of the Patriarchs agrees in every detail with the circumstances of Ancient-Oriental civilization of the period in question, as borne witness to by the monuments. The actual existence of Abraham is not historically proved by them. It might be objected: it is included in the picture. In any case, it must be allowed, the tradition is ancient. It cannot possibly be a poem with a purpose of later time. In view of the situations described, we might say the story could more easily have been composed by an intellectual writer of the twentieth century after Christ, knowing Oriental antiquity by means of the excavations, rather than by a contemporary of Hezekiah, who would have used the civilization of his own time in descriptions, and certainly would not have any excavated antiquities. Wellhausen worked out from the opinion that the stories of the Patriarchs are historically impossible. It is now proved that they are possible. If Abraham lived at all, it could only have been in surroundings and under conditions such as the Bible describes. Historical research must be content with this. And Wellhausen may be reminded of his own words (Komposition des Hexateuch 346): "If it (the Israelite tradition) were only possible, it would be folly to prefer any other possibility." The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East (New York, 1911), volume 2, page 45.

Not only have texts written in cuneiform script shed light on the patriarchal age, but also excavated sites. For example, the excavations of Ur of the Chaldees, that ancient city where Abraham was born and reared, show that he was the citizen of a highly civilized and cultured metropolis. In Ur's schools the children were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. The houses of ordinary citizens were better built at the time of Abraham than are the present-day houses of the lower-class people in Baghdad. The excavator, Sir Leonard Woolley, expresses his astonishment when making these discoveries by saying: "We must revise considerably our ideas of the Hebrew patriarch when we learn that his earlier years were spent in such sophisticated surroundings. He was the citizen of a great city and inherited the traditions of an ancient and highly organized civilization." - Ur the Chaldees (New York, 1930), pages 168, 169.

Sometimes light on certain Bible texts is obtained from unexpected sources. For example, the Bible tells us that the population of Palestine at the time of Abraham consisted of Amorites (Genesis 15:16) and also that Hittites lived in south Palestine (Genesis 15:20; 23:3). These texts have found corroboration from some strange objects discovered in Egypt some years ago. These were clay figurines representing, in a very crude way, bound prisoners of foreign countries. On them were written magical spells to curse Egypt's enemies, who are mentioned by name, with the places or countries where they lived. These figurines come from the eighteenth century BC, and another very similar series of texts from the nineteenth, hence from the patriarchal age.

The magical texts on the figurines contain the names of about one hundred of the local rulers of Palestinian and Syrian tribes. Many of the names can be identified, and show that the rulers of Palestine and Syria during the time of the patriarchs were Amorites. It is interesting to notice that we now possess from extra-Biblical sources the names of three kings who ruled over Jerusalem before the Hebrews came into the country. Two of them found on these texts bore the Amorite names Yaqar-'Aarnu and Sasa-'Anu, while another one known from other sources had the Hittite name Abdu-Kheba. This agrees in a remarkable way with a statement made twice by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 16:3, 45). Speaking about Jerusalem, Ezekiel says, "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." The fact that the only kings of Jerusalem known from outside sources bore Amorite and Hittite names is a wonderful corroboration of the afore-mentioned references to Genesis and Ezekiel. The Biblical mention of iron as existing in the patriarchal and Mosaic periods (Genesis 4:22; Deuteronomy 3:11; etc.) has always been taken by critical scholars as evidence for a late origin of the books of Moses. This was so, it was thought, because there could have been no extensive use of iron before the twelfth century BC. However, iron tools have been found embedded in the masonry of two pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty. Iron objects were also found in tombs of the Sixth, Eleventh, and Eighteenth dynasties in Egypt. In Mesopotamia the ruins of Tell Chagar Bazar, Tell Asmar, and Mari have produced iron implements made in the third millennium, thus furnishing evidence that iron was produced in the earliest periods of history. A steel ax originating from the middle of

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the second millennium, found at Ras Shamrah in Syria, caused great excitement in the scholarly world, since at the time of its discovery it had been held as entirely impossible that steel production had existed in that early age. Furthermore, texts from the time of Hammurabi (eighteenth century BC) and the Amarna Letters (fourteenth century BC) give literary evidence for the use of iron in the patriarchal and Mosaic ages in Mesopotamia and Egypt. All this evidence shows clearly that Moses knew what he was talking about when he mentioned iron as existing in the patriarchal and in his own time.

The same can be said of the camel. Abraham possessed camels, according to the Bible (Genesis 24:10), and they were also found in Egypt during his time (Genesis 12:16), but modern scholars tell us that the assumption "that camels were used in Egypt in ancient times" belongs to "the most obvious errors- of the books containing the passages of Genesis 12:16 and Exodus 9:3 (ROBERT H. PFEIFFER, Introduction to the Old Testament [New York, 1941], page 154). It is true that according to our present evidence the domesticated camel cannot have been widely used in the third and second millenniums BC. But we have abundant evidence that it was sporadically used throughout the patriarchal period, and before, as a beast of burden in Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Mesopotamia.

That the patriarchs were no legendary figures is also proved by their names. The names of Terah, Nahor, Haran, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Phinehas, and others have all been found in extra-Biblical sources. The names of the earlier patriarchs are mentioned in cuneiform texts of Mesopotamia, whence these men came, and the names of men connected with the Exodus movement have been found in Egyptian records. This does not mean that we have documents mentioning the individuals who are so well known to us through the Bible, but the occurrence of their names in non-Biblical texts of this period reveals to us that they were real and commonly used names and that their bearers fitted into the society in which they lived.

For a long time the Egyptian name Zaphnath-paaneah (Genesis 41:45), given to Joseph by Pharaoh, was a puzzle. One of the many recent discoveries made in Egypt brought this very name to light and has given us one more proof that the Bible names are not fictitious.

Bible critics claimed emphatically during the nineteenth century that the Hebrew script had not existed in the time of Moses. They considered this argument one of the strongest points for contending that the Pentateuch was written many centuries later. This view has now been completely refuted, and an abundance of material has come to light in recent years that shows that Hebrew writing was more widespread during the Mosaic period than was thought possible some years ago.

A number of inscriptions originating from the first half of the second millennium BC and written in alphabetic script have been found in Palestinian cities; also numerous alphabetic inscriptions showing that Hebrew alphabetic writing was widely used in the very area where Moses wrote his book of Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch have been discovered on the Sinai Peninsula. Furthermore, a little tablet was discovered in 1949 at Ras Shamrah (Ugarit), in northern Syria, that contained the complete alphabet in the Canaanite script. This document, originating from the fifteenth century BC, proved that the Hebrew alphabet had existed in the same sequence in the time of Moses as we have it today, something that no one hitherto believed to be possible. Nothing could better refute the old theory of the critics that writing was not sufficiently known in Moses' time to make possible the writing of the Pentateuch than this discovery.

The few examples presented in this chapter show why a great change has taken place in the scholarly attitude toward the early records of the history of the Hebrews. "This is not merely because a more conservative mood has descended upon Old Testament scholars, but because new light has been shed on the patriarchal age from many quarters." - H. H. ROWLEY, *The Servant of the Lord* (London, 1952), p. 271. This new light comes from the dust heaps of Ur and Nuzi, the mounds of Ras Shamrah and Lachish, the barren rock valleys of Sinai, the hot desert tombs of Egypt, and many other sites. Evidence brought to light by the spade of the archeologist has made the patriarchs live once more. Although no contemporary records mentioning them have been found so far, the archeological evidence shows that Moses pictured these men and women in their correct setting and against an accurate background. This proves clearly that the patriarchal stories are true, and that the conservative Christian is completely justified in accepting them as reliable and trustworthy.

## 6. Light on the Exodus and the Judges Period

NO ARCHEOLOGICAL evidence has been found that has a direct bearing on the Exodus. The Egyptians were loath to admit any defeats, and never recorded national catastrophes. Therefore we cannot

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expect to find any references to the Exodus in Egyptian documents. Furthermore, the Israelites, living like nomads during their wanderings through the deserts of Sinai and Trans Jordan, naturally left no traces of their forty years' journeying. Thus there is no hope of finding much archeological evidence from this very important period. Nevertheless, some discoveries have been made in the past that have a definite bearing on the Exodus.

Certain historical statements made in the Bible allow us to place the Exodus in the middle of the fifteenth century BC, and Joseph's work as prime minister of Egypt two centuries earlier. Both of these events fit very nicely into Egyptian history. During the seventeenth century BC Egypt was ruled by the Hyksos. They were Semitic intruders who, according to archeological evidence, introduced the horse and chariot into Egypt, which are also mentioned in the Bible for the first time in connection with the Joseph stories (Genesis 47:17; 41:43). Joseph, a Semite from Palestine, as the second man in the Nile kingdom (Genesis 41:41,43), fits well in a period when the country was ruled by people related to his family by race, but would not fit so well into Egyptian history at other times.

However, early in the sixteenth century BC, the Egyptians, under their native princes of Thebes, rose up against the hated foreign rulers, and after a long war drove the Hyksos out of the country. Pharaoh Ahmose, accomplishing the liberation of his country, was probably also the king who enslaved the Hebrews. Since they had come into the land under the Hyksos and had received favors from them, they shared the hatred the Egyptians felt against the Semites at that time. He was the "new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). In fact, Joseph and his meritorious work on behalf of Egypt did not mean anything to him, because Joseph had been in the service of a Hyksos king.

The new Egyptian dynasty became extremely powerful. Among its kings were great conquerors who carried out military campaigns in Asia and Nubia. They were also great builders, and in the building records of two of the kings preceding the Exodus, mention is made of Semitic slaves who were used to build royal monuments, temples, and palaces. Among these slaves we can easily recognize the unfortunate Hebrews. Also the history of Moses, including his education at the court, fits nicely into this period, when Hatshepsut, a remarkable woman, played an important role in Egypt's history, first as princess, then as a king's wife, and finally as the ruling queen. A study of Egyptian history reveals that there is no other period in which the Moses stories fit so well as during the time of Hatshepsut's life. Archeological discoveries made in recent years have done much to illuminate this interesting period of Egypt's history, and allow us to see the historical background of the Exodus in a better light than ever before.

Indirect evidence for the plagues the Egyptians brought upon themselves by their stubbornness in refusing to let the Hebrews depart, has been found in the inscription on a monument of King Thutmose IV, as the following observations show. If the Exodus took place in the middle of the fifteenth century BC, as Biblical chronological statements seem to indicate, Amenhotep II, an extremely cruel and hard ruler, sat on Egypt's throne at that time. During his reign the plagues must have occurred, and the crown prince must have been killed in the tenth plague, as stated in Exodus 12:29. In the light of this Biblical evidence it is most interesting to know that Thutmose IV, the successor of Amenhotep II, tells us that he unexpectedly received the promise to be Egypt's future king during a hunting expedition near the great pyramids at Giza. While he rested in the shade of the

Sphinx during the hot period of the day, the god represented by the Sphinx appeared to him and predicted his future kingship. When this came true he cleared the Sphinx of its encroaching sand and put up a large memorial stone between its forepaws, which is still there today.

It is quite evident that Thutmose IV as a prince had not counted on becoming king, since he had an older brother. However, when the crown prince suddenly died and Thutmose consequently became king, he as a good Egyptian did not want to tell posterity that his brother had fallen victim to a plague sent by the God of the hated Hebrews. For this reason he told the story of his elevation to the throne in a way that would throw no shadow on the divine kingship of the Pharaoh. Nevertheless, he could not hide the fact that he had unexpectedly come to the throne, and since he lived as prince in the middle of the fifteenth century BC, when the Exodus most probably took place, there is every reason to believe that the interpretation here given to his inscription on the Sphinx stele at Giza is correct.

The Exodus was followed by a great deliverance at the Red Sea and a march to the mount of law giving, Sinai. There the newly born nation of Israel received its constitution in the form of the Decalogue, and supplementary laws dealing with civil matters, health, and religion. The Mosaic origin of these various laws was seriously doubted by critical scholars in the nineteenth century. It was claimed that laws such as those found in the Pentateuch did not originate as early as the second millennium BC, and in fact did not exist earlier than the ninth century BC.



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It was therefore a great surprise to such scholars when in the winter of 1901-1902, during the excavations of Susa, a large monument was uncovered that contains almost three hundred sections of a codified law, the so-called Code of Hammurabi. This Babylonian king reigned, according to the lowest accepted chronology, from 1728-1686 BC, and his law code was therefore more than two hundred years older than the Mosaic law. Some of its provisions are very similar to the Mosaic civil laws, or even identical, as the following examples show:

Code of Haminurabi:

196. "If a citizen destroys the eye of the son of a citizen, his eye shall be destroyed!"

CH 197. "If he breaks the bone of a citizen, his bone shall be broken."

CH 200. "If a citizen knocks out a tooth of a citizen, his tooth shall be knocked out."

CH 199. "If he destroys the eye of a citizen's slave, or breaks the bone of a citizen's slave, he shall pay half of the purchasing price."

CH 206. "If a citizen has struck a citizen in a brawl, and has caused him injury, this citizen shall swear, 'I did not strike him deliberately; but he shall pay the bill of the physician!'"

Leviticus 24:19, 20. "And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again."

Deuteronomy 19:21. "And you eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

Exodus 21:18, 19. "And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keeps his bed: if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed."

Although some laws of Hammurabi's code differ from the Mosaic regulations, it is surprising that many of them are similar, the more so since one code was made up in Babylon and the other on the peninsula of Sinai, hundreds of miles away. Their similarities show that they both go back to the same God, the Author of right and truth. In Babylonia some of the divine principles of justice were corrupted in the course of centuries, and can be seen from some of the provisions found in Hammurabi's code, whereas the Mosaic law was given by means of divine inspiration at the time of codification, showing a more elevated character than its Babylonian counterpart. As important as the similarities between Hammurabi's and Moses' laws are, the discovery of Hammurabi's law code had its greatest importance in refuting the claims of the critics that laws like those of Moses could not have been given as early as the Pentateuch indicates.

For almost half a century it was thought that Hammurabi's law code was the oldest collection of laws. However, since the end of World War II three other law codes have been published that are from one hundred to four hundred years older than the laws of Hammurabi, although they are clearly its forerunners, showing a close relationship to it. It is especially interesting to see that the oldest of these newly discovered law collections contains laws far more humane than any of the others known so far. This shows that the closer a document of this nature is related to the original source, which was divine, the more it reveals the character of the real lawgiver-God.

After many unfortunate experiences in the desert, the children of Israel subjugated the Amorites east of the Jordan during the last year of their forty years' wandering, which was also the last year of Moses' long and useful life. Having occupied Trans Jordan, they invaded western Palestine under the leadership of Joshua, and defeated the native kings and their armies in numerous encounters. A most interesting light is thrown on this invasion by the earlier mentioned Amarna Letters, which were written by Palestinian and other Asiatic rulers to the Pharaohs, Amenhotep III and IV, in the first half of the fourteenth century BC, hence in the era of the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews.

' For many years scholars have debated whether the Habiru, who appear in these Amarna Letters as invaders of Palestine from across the Jordan, were the Hebrews. Recent discoveries have strengthened

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the equation. A stele inscribed by Ramses II, found several years ago at Beth-shan, mentions the Habiru as living in the same section of Palestine where the Hebrews lived during the period of the judges, in the thirteenth century BC. Also, a new tablet from the Amarna archive mentions a certain chief of the Habiru in Palestine without revealing his name, and the recently discovered Memphis stele of Amenhotep II speaks of Habiru prisoners captured in Palestine. More and more scholars have accepted the thesis that the Habiru were the Hebrews. Professor Albright recently gave up his neutrality and stated:

“There is in general such extraordinary resemblance between the rôle of the ‘Apiru and that of the Hebrews in the earliest biblical sources that it is scarcely possible to doubt some relation!’ -W. F. Albright, “The Smaller Beth-shan Stele of Sethos I (1309-1290 BC), In Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research, Number 125 (February, 1952), Page 32.

If this equation is correct, we have stronger evidence than before that the Hebrews invaded Palestine during the fourteenth century, and that the Amarna Letters and other contemporary documents describe the plight of the Canaanites as they saw it.

Most instructive in this respect are the letters of Abdu-Khepa, the king of Jerusalem, who sent one frantic letter after another to the king of Egypt. Since the invading Habiru, probably the Hebrews, were getting more powerful all the time, he appealed to the Pharaoh for military help, stressing the fact that he and other rulers of Canaan were fighting a losing battle against them. In one letter he wrote: “Let the king, my Lord, protect his land from the hand of the Habiru, and if not, then let the king, my Lord, send chariots to fetch us, lest our servants smite us.” Venting his chagrin over the fact that all his pleas had been unsuccessful, and that he had received neither weapons nor soldiers, he asked in all earnestness, “Why do you like the Habiru, and dislike the [faithful] governors?” In the same letter he warned the Pharaoh: The “Habiru plunder all the lands of the king. If there are archers [sent to assist me in my fight] in this year the lands of the king, my Lord, will remain [intact], but if there are [sent] no archers, the lands of the king, my Lord, will be lost.”

The plight of the Canaanites driven from their land by the invading Hebrews is also illustrated in a relief in the tomb of King Harmhab (reigning about 1353-1319 BC), which had been built when he was still a general, before he became king. It depicts Canaanites humbly requesting to be admitted to Egypt. The broken inscription explaining the picture states that “foreigners, and others have been put into their places destroying them, as well as desolating their towns.” This inscription also tells us that these unfortunate people had been starving and living like beasts of the desert before they reached Egypt, where they tried to get a haven of refuge. The inscription is from the middle of the fourteenth century BC, and seems to refer to the Canaanites, who had been defeated by Joshua and the Hebrews and driven from their cities and their country.

The Bible indicates that the reasons for the command to destroy the Canaanites were their religion, idolatry, and moral degeneration. God had shown much mercy to the inhabitants of Canaan for centuries before He finally destroyed them (cf. Genesis 15:16). But when the measure of His indignation was full, He charged the Hebrews to show no mercy to the people who would only corrupt their morals and religion if they should have any dealings with them (Deuteronomy 7:1-5). Aside from the Bible, very little was known about the Canaanite religion until a few years ago. However, a change came when in 1929 the excavation of Ras Shamrah, the ancient Ugarit, began, where hundreds of mythological texts written by Canaanite scribes in the fifteenth century BC were brought to light. They were written in an unknown alphabetic cuneiform script on clay tablets. The script was deciphered in an incredibly short time, and through these tablets we have finally been able to get a clear picture of the Canaanite religion and morals.

The gods, beliefs, and religious rituals of the Canaanites are now well known. One of their ritual practices consisted in boiling sacrificial kids in the milk of their mothers, a practice that was therefore prohibited to the Israelites (Exodus 23:19). These texts also give us a clear picture concerning the perverted morals of the Canaanites. The stories they told about their gods were extremely immoral. They tell repeatedly how the god Baal raped his sister Anath, although in a perverted sense of morality she remained a virgin in the eyes of her Canaanite worshipers. They also narrate how she, the goddess, delighted in bloodshed, unspeakable cruelties, and atrocities. They reveal that snake worship and human sacrifices were rife, and that ritual prostitution of both sexes was rampant in the temples. These few remarks may suffice to show how repelling the religious concepts and practices must have been at the time Moses ordered the Israelites to destroy their Canaanite enemies, and by no means to have any dealings with them. Few discoveries have shed so much light on Biblical and Canaanite customs during the middle of the second millennium BC as these texts from ancient Ugarit.

Other discoveries have acquainted us with the Horites, or Horims (Genesis 36:20; Deuteronomy

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2:12), a nation of which very little was known up to a few years ago. Today we know that the Horites were found throughout Western Asia during the second millennium. Numerous texts have revealed their history, language, and customs, and elucidated the statements made about them in the Pentateuch.

Another discovery is worth mentioning here. An inscribed statue discovered at Alalakh, in northern Syria, at the outset of the last war, which find was published after the end of the war, has provided means of identifying the home of the renegade prophet Balaam, showing that he resided on the middle Euphrates. On the statue is a further description of how the king of Alalakh had once been driven from his throne and spent some years with the Habiru in Palestine before he was allowed to return home.

All these discoveries coming from the time when the Hebrews settled in Canaan are most welcome to the student of the Old Testament. They light up for us the background of this very important period, and may in due time allow us to picture clearly the events that took place in the time of Joshua and the early judges, concerning which the Bible record is brief.

Although most modern scholars are still inclined to date the Exodus in the thirteenth century, or to assume that two exoduses had occurred, one in the fifteenth century BC and a second one in the thirteenth century (a theory totally unacceptable to fundamentalists), an increasing number of discoveries have been made in recent years that support the fifteenth-century Exodus. It is not denied here that some historical problems connected with the Exodus during the fifteenth century are still awaiting a solution, but this date is the only one that satisfies the Biblical chronological statements without altering or rejecting some of them.

The period of the judges, following the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews, was a time of religious and political ups and downs. The people, ruled by strong men called judges, sometimes followed the God of their ancestors, but more often worshiped the gods of the surrounding nations, and likewise were sometimes politically independent, but more frequently oppressed by foreign nations for longer or shorter periods. There are only a few archeological witnesses from this time, since the Israelites were still living more or less like nomads in the mountains of Canaan.

Their leaders, usually called by God for the special purpose of delivering His people from foreign oppressions and idolatrous practices, were called shophetim, generally translated "judges." However, their title implied much more than the judging of judicial cases. At that time the title shophet designated a magistrate or national leader. The rulers of Carthage, in northern Africa, founded as a Phoenician colony, were also called shophetim which the Romans transliterated *sufetes*.

One Egyptian monument originating from the period of the judges—the so-called Israel stele of King Merneptah, already referred to in chapter 3—mentions the Israelites. Merneptah, the successor of Ramses II, ruled during the last three decades of the thirteenth century BC, and was probably a contemporary of the judge Gideon who liberated Israel from the Midianites. Merneptah claims that he met and defeated Israel during a campaign in Palestine, mentioning also several well-known Palestinian cities. The important passage dealing with Israel reads thus:

"Desolated is Tehenu [a Libyan tribe];  
Hard [the land of the Hittites] is pacified, Conquered is the Canaan with every evil.  
Carried off is Ashkalon, seized is Gezer,  
Yanoam is destroyed,  
Israel is laid waste, it has no [more] seed.  
Hurru [the land of the Horites] has become a widow for Egypt."

This famous passage shows that Merneptah had encountered Israelites somewhere during one of his campaigns. Israel's location between the cities Ashkelon, Gezer, Yanoam, and the land of the Horites is an indication of where the king had met them. The three mentioned cities lay in southwestern Palestine; the land of the Horites was either a designation of the whole country, as frequently used in Egyptian texts, or of southeastern Palestine, the land of Edom. It is most interesting to notice that in the foregoing passage all names except Israel have in the Egyptian stone inscription the hieroglyphic determinative for "foreign country," whereas Israel has the determinative for "people." This difference shows that the Israelites encountered by Merneptah were not considered to be a settled nation, like the Horites, Hittites, or the inhabitants of Gezer, but still a nomadic people. This agrees well with the social situation existing in Palestine during the time of the judges as described in the Bible.

From the period of the judges come also some descriptions of Palestine given by traveling Egyptian officials. One of these reports comes from a man by the name of Wen-Amun, sent from Egypt to

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buy cedar wood in Byblos. Another is found in a satirical letter describing the adventures of a royal ambassador traveling through Palestine. They clearly reveal that the country was in a state of extreme insecurity. Thefts, robberies, and attacks were common, and neither social status nor sex was a protection against criminal assaults. These Egyptian records illustrate in the most vivid way the repeatedly made statement that “every man did that which was right in his own eyes,” because “in those days there was no king in Israel.” (Judges 17:6; 21:25). They also provide parallel stories to those found in Judges 17 to 20.

The excavations in Palestine have also revealed that several important cities were destroyed during this time, to which belong Lachish, Bethel, Beth-shemesh, and Shiloh. These destruction testify to the perpetual struggle the Israelites maintained against the Canaanites, Philistines, and other enemies. The destruction of Shiloh, dated by the evidence of archeology in the eleventh century, agrees well with the events described in 1 Samuel 4, when “the ark of the covenant” was taken in the battle at Aphek by the Philistines, and Shiloh was probably spoiled and sacked as the result of Israel’s defeat.

In this chapter some of the archeological evidences have been discussed that shed light on the events connected with Israel’s formation as a nation. They are important, and corroborate many Bible stories dealing with that important period of the people of God, but they are still meager in comparison with the many witnesses that testify concerning Israel during the following periods, when it was organized as one kingdom or two kingdoms and played an important role in the history of the ancient world.

## 7. Archeological Light on the United Kingdom

SAUL’S coronation as the first king of the Hebrew nation marked the beginning of a new era. The need for a stable and more permanent government had been keenly felt during the hectic days of the judges, with the result that the people demanded a king. Although the establishment of the kingdom was viewed as a spiritual regression by godly leaders such as Samuel, nevertheless it marked a certain political progress. However, Saul, compared with other kings of his time, was not much more than a chieftain who had gained control over all Hebrew tribes by common consent. In times of national danger they rallied around him and fought under his leadership against common enemies, but left him and returned to their habitations as soon as a crisis had passed. The new king’s authority over Israel was therefore not very strong, and it was not until the time of David that a real unified and healthy kingdom was established.

Saul made Gibeah, his small home town, the capital of the new kingdom. Its site was identified more than a century ago as Tell el-Fiii, a high mound lying about three miles north of Jerusalem. Because of its height and conspicuous shape, this hill, lying on the strategic ridge road that leads from Hebron to Shechem, formed an ideal place for a small capital city.

The American School of Oriental Research, in Jerusalem, under the direction of W. F. Albright, excavated Tell el-FAI in the campaigns of 1922 and 1933, and uncovered sections of Saul’s little castle. It proved to be a two-story citadel 170 by 155 feet.

The outer walls, built in case mate style, were eight to ten feet thick. Protruding towers at the four corners gave strength to the structure, which then served as a model for other Israelite fortresses of that period. The largest hall of this building, measuring 14 by 23 feet, was probably the audience chamber of Saul, where David played his lyre before the king.

The most dangerous enemies of Saul’s kingdom were the Philistines, who had come to Palestine with the migration of the Sea Peoples about 150 years before Saul’s accession to the throne. They had first settled in the coastal lowlands, but by the time of Saul had spread into the mountainous areas and occupied some of the most important Israelite cities of the country. Through their connections with confederates in Asia Minor and elsewhere they had access to iron, and possessed better weapons than the Israelites. In fact, iron weapons were almost nonexistent among the Hebrews, as can be seen from the statement made in 1 Samuel 13:22, that only Saul and his son Jonathan possessed such arms.

The Philistines, trying to keep the Hebrews in a backward and suppressed state, had apparently removed all metal workers from Israel, and held a monopoly on the production and upkeep of metal tools and weapons (1 Samuel 13:19-21). This made the Israelites completely dependent upon the Philistines, so much so that even for the repairing or sharpening of their tools they had to go to their enemies, who did this work for exorbitant prices.

This last-mentioned fact has become known through light shed by archeological evidence on a hitherto obscure text, 1 Samuel 13:21, which contains certain Hebrew words whose meaning had been lost

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in very early times. Even the translators of the Old Testament into Greek, working in the third and second centuries BC, did not understand this verse. One of its enigmatic words was the Hebrew term *pim*, which is left untranslated in the main text of the King James Version, although the margin mentions it as meaning “with mouths,” a translation that makes no sense. However, during the excavations of Palestinian preexilic sites a number of stone weights have been discovered bearing the inscription *pim*. Since each one weighs two thirds of a shekel, the meaning of the word *pim* is obvious. Hence, 1 Samuel 13:21 has to be translated “the charge was a *pim* for the plowshares and for the mattocks,” as the Revised Standard Version has correctly rendered it. Two thirds of a silver shekel was a rather stiff price for a plowshare, being at that time not more than a metal pin, since an Israelite could buy for that amount of money twenty quarts of barley or ten quarts of wheat, four pounds of wool or seventy baked bricks. This evidence shows that the Philistine smiths charged exorbitant prices for their metal products, and it illustrates how simple archeological discoveries can throw much light on the Bible narratives.

Another evidence, quite different from that just discussed, illuminates another phase of the life story of King Saul. During the early years of his reign, when he followed the Lord in harmony with divinely given instructions (Deuteronomy 18:10,11), he had the country cleared of all occultist practitioners, such as sorcerers or spiritualistic mediums (1 Samuel 28:9). However, after he had forsaken the Lord and had become dominated by an evil spirit, he sought in an hour of deadly crisis the help of a woman occultist, the so-called witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7-25). The records of the Hittites show that occultist professions were exercised by old women among that nation, later also among the Assyrians, and such women mediums had apparently reached Israel in the time of King Saul. It is also noteworthy that the Hebrew word translated in the Bible “familiar spirit” is found in the Canaanite texts of Ras Shamrah, where it probably means “spirit of the dead.” As long as Saul was obedient to God’s law, which provided the death penalty for all those who practiced spiritualistic professions, the country was free of such people. However, they came back when he fell into sin and wickedness, and with their witchcraft dragged him into eternal doom.

David, the successor of Saul, became Israel’s greatest king. He not only was a national hero and a successful general, but also showed great talents as an organizer, a poet, and a musician. Moreover, he made an outstanding contribution to his people’s religious history by unwaveringly serving his God to the best of his ability. When David united the nation he made a wise move by establishing his capital at Jerusalem, a site that, though centrally situated, had so far not belonged to any of the tribes of Israel. By conquering the Jebusite fortress of Jerusalem and making his capital a city that lay almost at the borderline between the southern and northern tribes, David showed much foresight.

The Jebusite city of Jerusalem occupied what is now known as the southeastern hill of Jerusalem. Because of its proximity to two strong springs, which have never failed to the present day, and since it was surrounded by deep valleys, the little city of Jerusalem was almost impregnable, and had remained in the possession of the Jebusites for four centuries, although the Hebrews were in the country and had occupied many nearby cities. Hence, the Jebusites, trusting in the strength of their city, recklessly told David that his efforts to take it would be doomed to failure, since the lame and blind could hold their strong fortress city (2 Samuel 5:6).

The Jebusites trusted not only in their strong walls but also in an unfailing supply of water, since they had ingeniously provided access to one of the springs lying outside of their city by an underground and concealed passage. This spring, called in the Bible “Gihon,” now has the name “Virgin’s Spring,” and lies in a subterranean cave in the Kidron Valley. The Jebusites had dug a horizontal tunnel from the spring to a cave underneath the city, which served as a reservoir. From there the water was drawn up by means of leather sacks through a narrow perpendicular shaft, called now, after its discoverer, Warren’s shaft. The opening of the spring cave in the Kidron Valley had then been closed and concealed with stones and earth in order to hide its existence from the eyes of strangers. In this way the inhabitants of Jerusalem could supply their needs of water without being obliged to leave their fortified city.

When David besieged Jerusalem he promised a great reward to the man who would take the city. Joab, one of his warriors, seems to have received intelligence about the existence of this tunnel and shaft, and consequently built his plan to conquer Jerusalem on his knowledge concerning this water system. The texts describing Joab’s conquest of the city (2 Samuel 5:8; 1 Chronicles 11:6) can best be explained by assuming that he and his men found the opening to the spring cave, crawled through the rock-hewn tunnel into the reservoir, and climbed up the shaft right into the midst of the city. After thus secretly entering the Jebusite fortress, it was easy to open its gates to the outside forces and thus take the city of Jerusalem by surprise.

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During the excavations carried out by R. A. S. Macalister and J. Garrow Duncan from 1923-25, part of the Jebusite bastion and a Davidic tower were uncovered; which were then declared a national monument by the government of Palestine. This wall section lying south of the presently walled city of Jerusalem is seldom visited by tourists, although it is one of the most ancient sites visible in the Holy Land. The square and massive tower built by King David right into this Jebusite wall is still standing to a height of several yards and provides---a clear picture of the fortification system existing at that time. It may not be superfluous to point out in this connection that the so-called Tower of David, forming part of the old citadel in the western sector of the presently walled city of Jerusalem, does not rightly bear this name. Although the tower is ancient, it dates no farther back than to the time of Herod the Great, being the only section of the city's fortification that Titus left standing as a monument of its former strength when he destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

David was also the organizer of Israel's Temple music. Archeological discoveries made in Palestine and surrounding countries have shed much light on the musical instruments of the ancient Israelites, with the result that several of the old concepts reflected in the translation of the King James Version have to be corrected. In fact, so much new information is now available on this subject that an adequate discussion would fill many pages, for which reason only one or two points can be mentioned here.

It may interest the reader to know that in every passage where the King James Version speaks of the "harp" in the Old Testament, the "lyre" is actually meant. David did not play a harp before King Saul; the instrument played so effectively by him was a lyre. The lyre was one of the most widely used stringed instruments of the ancient Orient. Pictures of lyre players have been found in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, and also in Palestine. They show that lyres of different shapes were used, and that they were played with, and without the help of plectra. However, the harp was also known to the Hebrews, and is mentioned occasionally in the Old Testament, although it is erroneously translated "psaltery" in some passages and "viol" in others. The student of ancient musical instruments can with great profit study the archeological evidence on the musical achievements of the Hebrews.

After a long and prosperous reign King David was followed by his son Solomon, who became known as the wisest of all kings, a great builder, and a trader of international fame. Since Solomon's large kingdom was situated strategically between the great civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, he could control the international trade routes. However, it was to Solomon's advantage that both countries, Egypt as well as Mesopotamia, were then passing through periods of weakness, enabling him to reign in peace and to amass fortunes by exacting toll from all transit trade and by trading with the surrounding nations.

Solomon also became famous for his extensive building activities in Jerusalem and other cities. In the capital he erected a marvelous temple and several palaces, which building resulted in an enlargement of the city to several times its former size. Unfortunately, the archeologist has so far not been able to corroborate this record. The numerous destruction of Jerusalem and the inaccessibility of the Temple area, being now most sacred to the Mohammedans, have made it impossible for excavators to do any explorations in that section of the city where Solomon's Temple and palaces stood. The so-called Stables of Solomon, shown to the tourists in the southeast corner of the Temple area, really have nothing to do with the great king's horses. These halls were built by the Crusaders on foundations erected by Herod the Great.

However, Solomonic structures have been excavated at Gezer, Megiddo, and other places in Palestine. The most interesting of these were found in the ruins of the large city of Megiddo, which in former times commanded transit routes through the Valley of Esdraelon and over Mount Carmel. The old Canaanite city, Megiddo, had played a great role in the fifteenth century BC, when King Thutmose III fought there against three hundred local princes, and again in the time of the judges, when Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanite army of Jabin and Sisera. Solomon made Megiddo one of his chariot cities and strongly fortified it (1 Kings 9:15; 10:26; 2 Chronicles 1:14). During the excavations carried out by an expedition from the University of Chicago, remains of Solomon's buildings came to light. There were large stables, which provided room for 500 horses, and spacious grounds for 130 chariots. The remaining masonry showed that builders had much improved their technical skills since the time of Saul and David. It was also interesting to find incised on one of the blocks of stone two interlaced triangles, the so-called Shield of David, the earliest occurrence of this symbol.

Although nothing has remained of Solomon's great Temple except its description in the Bible, light on this marvelous building has been shed by evidence excavated in Phoenicia and Syria. A temple uncovered at Tell-Tainat, in northern Syria, shows in its ground plan great similarities to that of Solomon's Temple, consisting first of a porch, with two free-standing pillars flanking its gate, then of a sanctuary, and finally the most holy place in the innermost section, where the cult object had stood. Phoenician temple

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models and pictures of temples also show as a typical feature two free-standing pillars, such as stood in front of Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 3:17). Such architectural similarities can easily be explained, since Solomon's master builder was lent to him by the king of Tyre. This man was half Phoenician and half Israelite by descent, but had been in Phoenician employ prior to his Jerusalem assignment (2 Chronicles 2:13, 14). Hence, it is not strange to discover certain Phoenician features in the architectural details of the Jerusalem Temple, since the building was done under a Phoenician architect.

The Bible tells us also that Solomon built ships at Ezion-geber, a port city at the eastern arm of the Red Sea, from which expeditions were sent to Ophir to obtain tropical products such as ivory and ebony, and exotic animals such as apes and peacocks (1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chronicles 8:17; 9:21). We learn also that gold, silver, and copper were more plentiful during Solomon's reign than ever before or later (1 Kings 7:46, 47; 2 Chronicles 4:17,18; 9:13,14,27). All these statements have recently been corroborated or illuminated by archeological evidence.

Before World War II Nelson Glueck, then of the American School of Oriental Research, in Jerusalem, and now president of Hebrew Union College, in Cincinnati, Ohio, carried out extensive explorations throughout Trans Jordan for several years. Among the important discoveries made in the course of his explorations belongs the finding of Solomon's copper mines in the land of Edom. Numerous such mines were found, from which the great king extracted copper ore that was smelted in crudely built furnaces near the mines. Huge heaps of slag left near those mines are witnesses of extensive mining operations carried on in ancient times, and the broken pottery found near and in the mines dates most of these activities in Solomon's time.

In recent years Professor Ghieck has extended his explorations to the Negeb, the dry desert like country west of Edom and south of Judea. There he has found rich iron mines, which are now, like the previously mentioned copper mines, once more being exploited, after having lain dormant for almost three thousand years. These discoveries have also proved the correctness of the words of Moses contained in his promise that Israel would receive "a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou may dig brass" (Deuteronomy 8:9). They further explain how King Solomon could be so rich in metals, which Egypt as well as Mesopotamia and other countries needed.

However, the most interesting discovery made by Nelson Glueck was a great copper production center at Ezion-geber, which proved to be not only a port city from which Solomon's Ophir expeditions started but also that king's ancient Pittsburgh. During the excavation of the ruins of this town a large number of smelters with modern-looking flues were uncovered. The smelters were arranged so that the wind, which at Ezion-geber almost continually blows from the northeast, automatically served to give the necessary draft to the fires in the furnaces. The discoveries of the iron and copper mines in Edom as well as the refining center at Ezion-geber show that Solomon got much of his tremendous wealth through the production of metal implements such as tools and weapons, and the sale of them to neighboring nations.

The few examples given in this chapter clearly reveal how much light Biblical archeology has shed on the history of the united kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon. The Bible story has in this way been vindicated, and additional information has become available.

## 8. The Divided Kingdoms of Judah and Israel

KING SOLOMON'S ruthless methods of exploiting his subjects to the limit of their endurance for the up building of his empire, and after Solomon's death, Rehoboam's foolish reaction to their just demands for relief, caused a tragic split in the kingdom, which was never repaired (see 1 Kings 11, 12). The evil results of this unfortunate division were civil wars between the two sister kingdoms and a political weakness that provided foreign powers with a welcome opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the Israelites.

Hence, shortly after Solomon's death we find Pharaoh Sheshonk (the Shishak of the Bible) invading Palestine. Conquering many cities, among them also Jerusalem, he humiliated the Hebrews and carried away the treasures that Solomon had accumulated during his long reign (1 Kings 14:25, 26). A list of more than one hundred Palestinian cities that Shishak claimed to have conquered, was inscribed on the temple walls of Karnak in Upper Egypt. Among others, such well-known place names as Megiddo, Taanach, Sochoh, Shunem, and Beth-horon are found on that list. Jerusalem is missing in the preserved part of the inscription, and was probably mentioned in that section of Shishak's victory text that is no longer

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extant.

A few years ago a second witness to Shishak's campaign was discovered during the excavations at Megiddo in Palestine. It consists of a fragment of a victory monument erected by the Pharaoh in the country of the invasion. Since Megiddo is one of the cities occurring in Shishak's list of conquered Palestinian towns, corroboration is thus obtained for his claim to have invaded not only the southern kingdom of Judah but also its northern neighbor, the kingdom of Israel. The very brief Biblical report does not mention the invasion of Israel, so that in this case the archeological evidence has provided additional information for a better understanding of an important episode in Israel's history.

Other recent discoveries pertaining to King Shishak were made by Prof. P. Montet. While excavating the ancient city of Tanis in Egypt, he discovered at the beginning of the last war some royal tombs of the same dynasty to which King Shishak belonged. Among them was the tomb of Shishak II, the grandson of the invader of Palestine. A golden bracelet found in that tomb bears an inscription stating it had been given to the deceased by his grandfather Shishak I. This bracelet may actually have been made of the gold that was taken from Jerusalem. It is the hope of all Egyptologists and students of the Bible that the tomb of King Shishak I may also be found, because of the possibility that it will contain objects that he brought back from Jerusalem and historical information concerning his military campaign, described only briefly in the Bible.

The earliest Hebrew king mentioned in ancient inscriptions is Omri, the father of Ahab. He was the founder of Samaria, Israel's capital city, and also subjugated Moab, as revealed by the famous Moabite Stone, which was discovered in 1868 in Dibon, east of the Dead Sea. The Bible does not devote much space to Omri (1 Kings 16:16, 17, 21-28), since he, as a wicked ruler, in the eyes of the sacred author of the book of Kings did not deserve special attention. However, his political strength and military success gave him a fame among the surrounding nations such as no other ruler of the northern kingdom of Israel ever enjoyed. This can be seen from the fact that Israel appear in Assyrian records under the name "Omri-Land" as late as 120 years after the dynasty of Omri had been extinguished and 150 years after Omri's death.

Archeological discoveries pertaining to Ahab, Omri's son, are varied and rather plentiful. The American excavations of Samaria, which uncovered the ruins of the royal palaces, storehouses, and city walls, made several interesting discoveries that clarified certain problems of the Bible story. For a long time it was not known how one was to understand the text that Ahab had built an ivory house (1 Kings 22:39). It could hardly be imagined that ivory had been so plentiful as to be used as building material for a palace. Some commentators thought that Ahab's palace had been painted an ivory color, which had given rise to the name "ivory house"; others thought that it had been decorated with pieces of ivory.

This last suggestion has proved to be correct. Numerous beautiful ivory plaques were found in the debris of Ahab's palace. They show us the high artistic craftsmanship of Ahab's time, and that his furniture and palace walls had been overlaid with carved ivory panels, which were also painted in bright colors, as the preserved fragments clearly show. They are the remnants of the spoil the Assyrians took when they conquered Samaria in 722 BC. In cutting down the ivory panels from that palace they left the broken pieces behind in the buildings they burned down. These ivory fragments, preserved by the debris of the ancient palace until they were brought to light again in our day, are now mute witnesses to the veracity of a text of Scripture describing Ahab's building activity. Various other ivory panels have been found in an Assyrian palace at Nimry2d, the ancient Calah, one of the royal Assyrian residence cities. They are very similar in design to those found in Samaria, and either came from the same palace or were carved after the design the Assyrians had seen in Samaria.

During the excavations of Ahab's storehouse almost one hundred inscribed potsherds, called ostraca, were found. They present tax notes concerning the receipt of oil and wine by the royal treasury, written on the cheapest writing material in existence—broken pieces of pottery. These unpretentious documents are nevertheless of great value in acquainting us with the vocabulary, orthography, and script of the Hebrew language in the ninth century BC. The personal names found in these texts also reveal the religious mixture existing in Ahab's time, because there were just as many people whose names were connected with Baal as there were people whose names were connected with Jehovah. Among them we find such well-known names as Abibaal, Baalazar, Baalazar, Baalmeoni, Meribaal, and Baala, to give a few examples of names that were connected with Baal. Among the names containing the divine name Jehovah in an abbreviated Hebrew form were Jedaiah, Jelioiadah, Shemariah.

These personal names provide evidence for a better understanding of the religious conditions prevailing at the time Elijah fought so vigorously against the worship of Baal. Yet they also confirm the truth of the divine statement made to Elijah that many others had not bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kings



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19:18), a fact that Elijah had not realized before, thinking that he was the only true worshiper of God left in Israel. The Samaritan ostraca, however, show us that there were still just as many parents who gave their children names connected with Jehovah as there were parents who gave their children Baal names.

One name of the Samaritan ostraca, Egeliau, also connected with Jehovah, is of special interest because of its meaning, "Jehovah is a calf." Jeroboam I, the first king of the northern kingdom, wishing to prevent his citizens from going to the Temple at Jerusalem to worship the true God, set up two calves in temples erected in his territory, one at Bethel and the other at Dan. At these places Jehovah was worshiped, as were the pagan gods of Israel's idol-worshiping neighbors. This became known as Jeroboam's sin (1 Kings 12:18-30; 15:34; etc.), and was one of the main reasons for the downfall of the northern kingdom. Although the golden calves disappeared long ago, the name of a lowly citizen of Ahab's time bears witness to the fact that people in his time considered Jehovah to be a calf, as the images at Bethel and Dan taught them.

Ahab was also the first Hebrew king mentioned in the Assyrian records. King Shalmaneser III states that he fought against a coalition of western kings in the battle of Qarqar in Syria in 853 BC, in which Ahab took part with ten thousand foot soldiers and two thousand chariots. Of all the allied armies of the enemies of the Assyrians mentioned by Shalmaneser, Ahab had the strongest chariots and the second largest infantry, standing only behind Damascus, whose king had mustered twenty thousand soldiers, according to the Assyrian records. This shows that Ahab, as a worthy successor of his famous father, Omri, possessed a formidable army and was a power to be reckoned with.

The next king of Israel mentioned in Assyrian records is Jehu, the exterminator of the dynasty of Omri and Ahab. He appears in relief on the well-known Black Obelisk, now in the British Museum, found by Layard in Nimrod more than one hundred years ago. Jehu, the only Hebrew king of whom we thus have a contemporary picture, is represented as kneeling before Shalmaneser III and assuring him of his subjection, while a rich tribute is carried by his retinue.

Not only kings of Israel appear in contemporary records on stone or clay, but also some of their foreign associates or antagonists, such as the kings of Damascus. Several Benhadads and also Hazael are mentioned on Aramaic stone monuments and in Assyrian inscriptions, and Hazael's name even occurs on ivory decorations that had once ornamented that king's bed. In fact, the various contemporary records that have been discovered in recent years, combined with the Biblical narrative as found in the books of Kings, make it possible to reconstruct a rather detailed political history of Western Asia, in which the kingdom of Israel played a somewhat questionable role.

Especially frequent in Assyrian annals are the references to Israel during the last years of the existence of the northern kingdom. It is during this time that the kingdom of Judah appears in the records of the Assyrians for the first time. Tiglath-pileser III dealt with Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea of Israel, but also with Azariah and Ahaz of Judah, and mentions all these kings in his inscriptions.

Under Hoshea came the end of the kingdom of Israel, the reward for its unfaithfulness toward God and men. Documents concerning the fall of Samaria after a three-year siege have been known for a long time. The Assyrian king Sargon II claims in his inscriptions, with which historians have been familiar since the early days of Assyriology, that he took the city of Samaria at the beginning of his reign and carried away 27,290 captives, besides 50 chariots. For a long time it was believed that he must have been the conqueror of Samaria, although the Bible states that Shalmaneser, Sargon's predecessor, was the king who besieged the capital of the northern kingdom. However, more recent evidence shows that Sargon attributed to himself something that really his predecessor had accomplished. Of Shalmaneser, the conqueror of Samaria, all inscriptions have vanished. They were probably willfully destroyed by the usurper Sargon, who followed him on the throne. During the first seven years of his reign he did not claim to have been conqueror of Samaria, but suddenly, in his eighth year, he began to tell in his inscriptions that he had conquered that city.

The Bible tells us that after the fall of Samaria the Israelites were transplanted into different parts of the Assyrian Empire, to Halah and to Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6). This is the last Biblical report concerning the citizens of the ten tribes that constituted the northern kingdom. After they were led into exile the Israelites vanished from history. Later, some may have joined the Jews who were carried into the Babylonian captivity, and either returned with them to Palestine under Cyrus or remained in Babylon, where a strong Jewish community was developed. However, the great majority of the Israelites, being idolatrous and little different from other pagans, may have lost their individuality and been absorbed by the people among whom they were settled.

Only a few texts that mention some of these captive Israelites have been found in Mesopotamia.

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One tablet coming from Tell Halaf, the ancient Gozan, mentioned in 2 Kings 17:6, contains the record of a transfer of an Israelite slave girl by the name of Dinah. Men mentioned in the same text are a certain Ishmael and a slave by the name of Hoshea. One of the Assyrian royal letters found in the capital of Nineveh, dealing with the affairs at Gozan, mentions two officials with Hebrew names and a certain "Halbishu of the city of Samaria." A number of other texts discovered in the Chabor region, also mentioned in 2 Kings 17:6 (under the name Habor), contain a number of Israelite names.

These are the only traces we can find of the defeated citizens of the northern kingdom. From that time on they simply disappear, and are not traceable any more by the historian. Everything that is said contrary to this fact by the advocates of the Anglo-Israelite movement, who find the descendants of the "ten lost tribes" among the present population of the British Isles, is historically unfounded and completely untenable.

As long as the northern kingdom existed, the southern kingdom of Judah is mentioned only a few times in the Assyrian records. Before the fall of Damascus in 732 BC and Samaria in 722 BC, Israel and Damascus served as buffer states for Judah, with the result that the little southern kingdom remained comparatively unmolested by the powerful Assyrians. This situation changed, however, with the fall of Damascus and Samaria and the organization of an Assyrian province bordering on the kingdom of Judah.

From that time on we find Judah also playing a role in the political objectives and aspirations of the Assyrian emperors. Well known is the story of Sennacherib's invasion of Palestine and his inglorious defeat at Jerusalem, a story told in three books of the Old Testament (2 Kings 18, 19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36, 37). Sennacherib's own account of this campaign, inscribed on large clay cylinders and depicted on carved wall relief, has been known for many years. Following the common practice of never admitting any failures, the king boasts of great military achievements in Palestine, although he does not claim to have taken Hezekiah's capital, prudently stating only that he had shut up the king in Jerusalem like a bird in its cage.

Many students of the Bible have for a long time believed that the Biblical records actually describe two different campaigns of Sennacherib, although it is not easy to recognize which parts of the narratives refer to the first campaign and which parts to the second one. Recently published hieroglyphic texts of Taharka, the Nubian king of Egypt who played an important role in at least one invasion of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:9), have made it certain that Sennacherib invaded Palestine twice. Owing to these recent discoveries, it has become evident that the Assyrian king's already mentioned boastful records refer to his first campaign only, in which he gained at least a partial success, although he failed to conquer Jerusalem. It is now also clear that he refrained from leaving to posterity any records concerning his second campaign, which ended in a divinely ordained catastrophe at the gates of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35, 36), since he had little reason for boasting concerning that event.

Sennacherib found an inglorious end at the hand of his own murderous sons (2 Kings 19:37). This event, formerly known only from the Biblical record, is also attested by cuneiform inscriptions that have come to light during excavations at different ruined sites in Mesopotamia.

Manasseh, Hezekiah's wicked son who occupied the throne of Judah for fifty-five years, is mentioned as the vassal of Assyria in inscriptions of the kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. That Judah had become a poor country by that time is especially evident from an Assyrian list of tributes, in which the Ammonites are listed as paying two gold minas, the Moabites one gold mina, while Judah paid only ten minas of silver, which amounted to only two thirds of the amount of Moab's tribute, and to only one third of that of Ammon. Owing to the misbehavior of its ruler, the kingdom that had once held in subjection all neighboring countries, including Ammon and Moab, had become a third-rate state of little political significance. Its end was rapidly approaching, and was postponed for a few decades only because Josiah, Manasseh's grandson, served God faithfully and initiated rigid religious reforms during his reign.

Yet not only Judah's end was near. The apparently strong Assyrian Empire even preceded the little kingdom of Judah in its fall. The last years of the Assyrian Empire were shrouded in mystery until a few years ago. With Ashurbanipal (669-626? BC) all Assyrian sources stop. Many history books contain the date 606 BC as the year of the fall of Nineveh. It was only in 1923 that a tablet found among the many unpublished treasures of the British Museum revealed that this date was wrong. This tablet, published by C. J. Gadd, contains an account of the military campaigns that Nabopolassar of Babylon and Cyaxares of Media conducted against Assyria during the years 616-609, BC. It also relates how they conquered one Assyrian city after another and finally destroyed the empire which had ruled the world for several centuries. It also clearly shows that Nineveh was destroyed in the year 612 BC, and that the Assyrian Empire was divided between the two victorious powers during that year. The whole complicated history of Egypt,

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Babylon, and Judah during this period, for which the Bible is our main source, has been clarified immensely by this one historical text. A number of problems were solved in this way, and there is scarcely any period of Old Testament history that we can now reconstruct with so much certainty and accuracy as the period of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and their Jewish contemporaries from Josiah to Zedekiah.

Astronomical and other texts written on cuneiform tablets have fixed the regnal years of Nebuchadnezzar so definitely that the synchronisms given in the Bible between his reign and the rule of his Jewish contemporaries allow us to date the beginning of Daniel's captivity (Daniel 1:1) with absolute certainty in the year 605 BC. In the same way Jehoiachin's captivity is dated at 597 BC, and the fall of Jerusalem in July, 586 BC. Since these dates can be fixed astronomically, there is not the least doubt about the accuracy, although many scholars are reluctant to accept them and change from the previously accepted dates, 598 BC for the captivity of Jehoiachin and 587 BC for the fall of Jerusalem.

## 9. Archeological Notes on the Exile and the Restoration Period

CRITICAL scholars in recent years have paid much attention to some of those Bible books that were written during and immediately after the Exile, namely, Ezekiel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. These books were first violently attacked, and then declared to be historically unreliable. This had the result that they shared the fate of Daniel and Esther, which the followers of higher criticism for a long time have considered to be unhistorical and fictitious.

For example, when G. Hölzschel wrote his book on Ezekiel in 1924, he said that it was high time that someone attacked Ezekiel, since that book had remained untouched while the knife of criticism had been put to almost all prophetic books of the Old Testament. His work was soon followed by that of C. C. Torrey of Yale University, who declared Ezekiel to be a late fiction and historically very unreliable. In the same way he had previously treated the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. He and his followers even went so far as to doubt the historicity of the Biblical records describing the destruction of the cities of Judea and the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. After the destruction of Jerusalem was questioned, the Babylonian captivity was doubted, and eventually also the return under Cyrus. However, the discoveries of recent years have not only put to shame the critics, but also contradicted most of their claims and supported the Bible records in a remarkable way.

The excavations of Lachish, Debir, and other Judean towns have shown that these cities were thoroughly destroyed in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and that not one case is known in which a city of Judah was continuously occupied through the exilic period. Seals inscribed with the name of King Jehoiachin, found in Debir and Beth-shemesh, have also proved the existence of this ephemeral king during the period before the destruction of those cities.

Furthermore, a number of tablets, found in the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace at Babylon, have shed new light on the exilic period. When Prof. Ernst F. Weidner deciphered them just before World War II, he found them to contain records of provisions handed out by the imperial storehouse to foreign employees and to exiled royalties of Nebuchadnezzar. Among them Jehoiachin, king of Judah, his five sons, and their Jewish tutor appear as recipients of oil and wine. This proved that Jehoiachin was a captive in Babylon during the time when these tablets were written (592 BC and later), a fact that had been doubted very much by a number of critical scholars. Prof. W. F. Albright, referring to this fact and various discoveries that prove that the events connected with the Exile as recorded by the books of Chronicles and Ezekiel are correct, says that – "every pertinent recent find has increased the evidence both for the early date of the Book of Chronicles (about 400 BC or a little later) and for the care with which the Chronicler excerpted and compiled from older books, documents and oral traditions which were at his disposal.

"The new documentation brings other confirmations of the authenticity of the Book of Ezekiel." – "King Jehoiachin in Exile" in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 5 (1942), pp. 53, 54.

Other evidence concerning the last days of the kingdom of Judah has come to light in Palestine, where not many ancient inscriptions have ever been found. During the excavations of Lachish twenty-one letters were found written on potsherds (broken pieces of pottery). They are the dispatches of an army officer who fought against Nebuchadnezzar's forces during the last days of Judah's existence as a kingdom. One of these letters contains the message that the writer and his soldiers were still watching the signals of Lachish, although they could no longer see those of Azekah, implying that Azekah had already fallen to the Babylonians. This letter was written during those tragic days of which Jeremiah spoke in chapter 34, verse

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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 fenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.”

The Lachish Letters also refer to an unnamed prophet who seems to have been well known, because he is simply called “the prophet.” A number of scholars think that Jeremiah is referred to, especially since the army officer who wrote the letters leaves the impression in his dispatches that he was a faithful servant of Jehovah.

An interesting parallel to Jeremiah 38:4 is also found in one of these letters, which speak of the princes in almost the same way as the princes spoke of Jeremiah. They accused Jeremiah of weakening “the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them,” when Jeremiah advised them to surrender to the Babylonians and stop the senseless resistance. In this letter, written on a piece of pottery, the army officer wrote to his superior concerning letters sent by the princes: “Pray, read them! And behold the words of the princes are not good, [but] weaken our hands and slacken the hands of the men who are informed about them.”

These Lachish Letters have also provided much welcome information concerning the language and script of Jeremiah’s time. The similarity of the Hebrew language used in these letters is so close to the language found in the books of Kings, Jeremiah, and other contemporaries that there can be no question that we have in these books the unaltered writings of their authors, and that no changes of any consequence have been made in their writings. If such changes had been made, or these books were written in later centuries, some differences between their language and that employed in the Lachish Letters would be noticeable.

Furthermore, these twenty-one letters contain many personal names of men who lived in the last few months of Judah’s existence. The great majority of these names are connected with the name of Jehovah, just as the last part of Jeremiah’s name in its Hebrew form is an abbreviation of the divine name Jehovah. The names found in the Lachish Letters show clearly the influence of the reform of King Josiah, when idolatry was stamped out and all pagan gods were removed from the country. Written some forty years after Josiah’s reform, these letters clearly reflect the great religious changes that had come over Judah. They stand in marked contrast with similar documents that come from Samaria, which have shown that there were just as many names connected with Baal as names connected with Jehovah in the time of Ahab. On the other hand, not one of the names found in the Lachish Letters contained the name of a foreign deity. Only the names of Judah’s true God, Elohim and Jehovah, are found in these documents.

From the same period comes an Aramaic letter written on a sheet of papyrus that was found a few years ago in Egypt. This letter was written by Adon, a king of one of the Philistine cities, probably Ashkelon. It is addressed to Hophra of Egypt, the king who tried unsuccessfully to come to the help of besieged Jerusalem (Jeremiah 37:5). In this letter King Adon told the Pharaoh that the Babylonian army was marching along the coast of Palestine toward the south and that it had advanced as far as Aphek, lying only thirty-five miles northeast of Ashkelon. He requested immediate help from Egypt in order to resist.

The pathetic plea of a Palestinian ruler, who, like King Zedekiah, had listened to the false inducements of Egypt and rebelled against the Babylonian overlord, helps us to understand the terrible disappointment the people of Jeremiah’s time must have felt when all their hopes of retaining their independence were shattered by the inactivity of the Egyptian army, or by the little or insufficient help it gave them in their fight against the Babylonians. This letter demonstrates how truly were being fulfilled Jeremiah’s prophecies, in which he had exhorted the nations surrounding Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar faithfully and warned them of the terrible consequences if they rebelled against him (Jeremiah 27:2-11).

Further, this document is an early example of a diplomatic letter written in Aramaic, which discovery came as a great surprise to the scholarly world. No one had thought that a Philistine king of the early sixth century BC would have used the Aramaic language in addressing an Egyptian king. Inasmuch as this letter comes from the same period in which the Aramaic chapters of the book of Daniel were written, the letter is of great importance to the student of the Bible. There was a time when the books of Daniel and E= were vehemently attacked as being late and fictitious productions because of the Aramaic parts and documents inserted. Today no one knowing the facts can consistently use the Aramaic argument any more to support a date later than the sixth or fifth centuries BC for the origin of these books. The many Aramaic documents of the fifth century found in different parts of Egypt have produced such an abundance of material that it is comparatively easy to refute the claims of critical scholars in this respect.

The rediscovery of Belshazzar forms another glorious chapter in the history of Biblical archeology. Until a few decades ago Belshazzar was known only from the fifth chapter of the book of Daniel. He was never mentioned by a Greek author or in any extra-Biblical source of the pre-Christian

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period, with the exception of the Apocryphal book of Baruch, which is based on Daniel. Fundamentalist commentators who defended the book of Daniel a century ago had a hard time explaining the identity of the Belshazzar of Daniel 5. Some thought he was Nabonidus, others that Belshazzar was another name for Nebuchadnezzar's son Evil-Merodach.

When the Babylonian cuneiform texts of the last years of the Babylonian Empire became known, the long-lost name of Belshazzar as crown prince of the last king of Babylon finally came to light. However, it was only in 1924, when Sidney Smith discovered a tablet in the British Museum which declares Belshazzar had been made king by his father, that the real function of this man became known. The numerous texts dealing with Belshazzar and his father Nabonidus were then collected by Prof. R. P. Dougherty in his book *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, published in 1929, which contains a wealth of useful material that supports the historical parts of Daniel. He showed that Nabonidus in his third regnal year had transferred the kingship to his son Belshazzar, when he himself left for Tema in Arabia, where he spent many years of his life, and that Belshazzar had exercised the kingship 'over the Babylonian Empire during the last years of its existence. His investigations led Dougherty to the conclusion that the fifth chapter of Daniel is, next to the actual cuneiform tablets, the most accurate source of our knowledge of the last days of Babylon.

Prof. R. H. Pfeiffer, who does not believe that the book of Daniel was written in the sixth century BC, but declares it to be a product of the Maccabean era, is puzzled. He cannot understand how accurate information about Belshazzar was put into the book of Daniel at a time when this king had been so completely forgotten in the ancient world that not one of the Greek authors mentions him. Therefore he makes the following statement:

"We shall presumably never know how our author learned that Belshazzar, mentioned only in Babylonian records, in Daniel, and in Bar. 1:11, which is based on Daniel, was functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon in 538."-Introduction to the Old Testament (New York, 1941), pp. 758, 759.

For those who believe that the book of Daniel was written in the sixth century BC there is no problem, but a scholar who does not want to give up his critical attitude finds himself in a serious dilemma. He cannot understand how a man of the Maccabean age could be so accurately informed about the historical events that took place three hundred years earlier, when no reliable source material of that period existed any more.

It is still impossible to prove the existence of Darius the Mede (Daniel 5:31; 6:1 ff; 9:1; 11:1) from contemporary records or to ascertain from extra-Biblical sources of that time the role he played in the days after Babylon's fall. However, since so many obscure and seemingly unhistorical details of the book of Daniel have recently been elucidated and proved to be correct, there is no doubt that this book can be completely trusted and that any doubts regarding its historical veracity in this respect should be shunned. The unsolved problem in connection with Darius the Mede should not disturb anyone's mind. A few decades ago Bible expositors had the same difficulty with regard to Belshazzar, a problem that has now been solved in a most remarkable way. New discoveries may at any time throw light on this remaining problem of the book of Daniel.

Although Darius the Mede remains an unsolved Biblical problem, archeological evidence has confirmed the Biblical records concerning other rulers of that time, such as Cyrus, the first king of Persia. His decree, recorded three times in the Bible (2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5), permitted the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild their temple, and it restored to them their holy vessels, which the Babylonians had carried to Babylon as spoil of war.

The original decree of Cyrus has not yet been discovered among the cuneiform tablets of his time, but an inscribed clay barrel, commonly called Cyrus Cylinder, which was found in the ruins of Babylon, tells of the king's measures in regard to peoples that had been subjugated by the Babylonians. Telling the story of the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, and his joyful reception by the people, it contains also the statement that Cyrus returned to their original cities cult images stolen by the Babylonians, that he rebuilt sanctuaries that had been in ruins for a long time, and that he gathered the former inhabitants and returned them to their habitations. This document reveals that it was Cyrus' policy to show magnanimity to his new subjects and gain their good will by fulfilling their justified wishes. This objective could most easily be reached by remedying injustices done to the peoples by the Babylonian kings. The Jews, among others, were the beneficiaries of the wise and foresighted policies of Cyrus.

Cyrus, however, was not the only Persian ruler who was favorably disposed toward the Jews. Decrees favoring them were also issued by Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I (Ezra 6:6-12; Esther 8:8-13; Ezra 7:11-26). However, these Persian decrees mentioned in the Bible were held in very low esteem by

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most critical scholars until the discovery of the Elephantine papyri, which provided parallel documents and proved the fallacy of their arguments. These authentic documents, written in Aramaic in the fifth century BC, show so many similarities with the official Persian records quoted in the Bible that many scholars have been convinced that Ezra's documents are genuine.

Eduard Meyer, the great German historian, was one of the few scholars of first rank who vigorously defended the Persian decrees found in the book of Ezra, at a time when their authenticity was widely questioned. Having reached the conclusion that these documents were genuine, he wrote in 1896 that all objections to their authenticity would disappear if a large number of official Persian decrees would ever be found. That was written before the discovery of the Aramaic papyri of Elephantine. And when this hope was realized a few years later, he wrote with satisfaction:

“This prediction has been fulfilled in an unexpected way and to an extent of which the boldest imagination had not dared to dream. An Egyptian city, the border fortress Elephantine, has presented us with a great number of documents from a Jewish community of the Persian period, among them numerous private documents and letters, also several decrees of the Persian government, and requests of the Jewish community to it; and these documents, resurrected from the debris, agree in form and words with the documents contained in Ezra in such detailed ways that no doubt concerning their authenticity can exist any more.” *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine* (Leipzig, 1912), p. 4.

Among the Elephantine papyri is an order of Darius II concerning the Passover feast, decreeing that the Elephantine Jews should carefully observe all the provisions of their law pertaining to that feast. It specifies that they should be clean when the feast was approaching, should work on neither the fifteenth day of Nisan nor the twenty-first day of that month, the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and should not drink beer or have anything in their house in which there was leaven during the seven days of that feast.

Scholars were deeply impressed when this document became known. It had seemed incredible that a Persian king would have such concern for details of the Jewish ceremonial as the decree of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7 indicated, but this papyrus of Darius II, revealing an even greater concern for such detail than is expressed in any of the Persian decrees quoted in the Bible, has proved how foolish it is to doubt the veracity of Biblical records because of the absence of extra-Biblical parallels. There is no doubt that if the order of Darius II concerning the Passover feast found at Elephantine had been quoted in the Bible, it would have been a welcome target for critical scholars for many years, and it would have been extremely difficult for fundamentalist students of the Bible to prove its authenticity.

Most historical problems connected with the post exilic period are of a minor nature, and so are the archeological discoveries shedding light on the period of the return of Judah from Exile, and her restoration. The following discoveries may seem to be insignificant in themselves, but each one of them has broken down arguments used by critical scholars against the authenticity of the Scriptures, and has supported seemingly anachronistic or fictitious statements of the Bible.

The use of the “dram” as a monetary unit in the time of Cyrus as stated in Ezra 2:69 was always difficult to explain. Historians claimed that the word “dram” could not refer to anything except the daric, a gold coin introduced by Darius I. If this explanation of the “drams” of Ezra 2:69 were correct, we would have to assume that the author of the book of Ezra was badly informed about the time of Cyrus, and made the Jews use a monetary system that actually did not exist yet. This problem, which seems small to some, was serious in the eyes of those who believed that the book of Ezra records actual facts and not fictitious stories. The difficulty has been solved in recent years. In 1931 W. F. Albright and O. R. Sellers excavated the ancient city of Beth-zur, in Palestine, and found that Greek silver coins, the so called Attic drachma, had been used in Palestine during the early Persian period, a fact that no one would have held possible before this discovery. Once more a small detail of the Scripture narrative was proved to be correct.

There have been very few scholars who were willing to attach any historical value to the book of Esther. Even many fundamentalists were not so sure that this book recorded actual historical facts. It is still not possible to prove the historicity of the story of Esther, but it is a fact that the excavations of Susa (Biblical Shushan) have shown that the writer of Esther must have been very well acquainted with the palace of Susa itself, as well as with the Persian court customs and regulations, since the conditions reflected in Esther agree with the results of recent archeological investigations in a remarkable way. Some scholars have been much impressed by this fact, and admit that only someone who was intimately acquainted with the royal palace could have written the story in such an accurate setting.

The story implies, furthermore, that the Jews living during the latter part of the reign of Xerxes I received favorable treatment from the Persians. This conclusion gained from the book of Esther is

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supported by a business archive found in Nippur by the University of Pennsylvania expedition many years ago. The great business house of Murashu & Sons at Nippur was a concern of bankers, real estate agents, brokers, and traders. Their extensive business archive of thousands of documents covering the time of Artaxerxes I and Darius II has been preserved. In these business documents occur numerous names of Jews who had been connected with this famous house of Lower Mesopotamia. We find these Jews as moneylenders of considerable amounts, as landlords of great estates, as businessmen dealing with commodities running into great sums of money, and as tax collectors and governors of districts. These documents show clearly that the Jews in the time of Artaxerxes I had become rich and had gained favor with the Persians, implying that something had happened previously that had procured them this favored position in the country of their former exile. They explain at the same time why among the Jews who were still living in Mesopotamia there was little enthusiasm for returning with them to their old but ruined homeland. The story of Esther, which provides the historical background for the favored treatment of the Jews in the period preceding the reign of Artaxerxes I, is in this way also indirectly shown to be correct.

The most important support for the authenticity of the book of Esther, however, came through the recent discovery of a cuneiform tablet in the Berlin Museum. Prof. A. Ungnad, working on the unpublished tablets of that museum during World War II, found a text mentioning a certain man by the name of Marduka, the Babylonian transliteration for Mordecai, as one of the high state officials in Shushan during the reign of Xerxes. His title, sipir, indicates that he was an influential counselor. This discovery has led scholars who had never believed in the historicity of the book of Esther to admit that a historical kernel must underlie the story of this book. If the story were fictitious, how could there be found a man in an influential position bearing the same name the Bible gives Mordecai, in the same city Shushan, and at the time in which he should have lived according to the Bible?

There is no evidence from the Bible record, nor from outside sources, that any other Jew than the one mentioned in the book of Esther was known by the name of Mordecai in the time of Xerxes (486-465 BC). When this man had become "great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren" in the Persian Empire (Esther 10:3), his name became a household word in Jewish circles, and many parents gave their children the name Mordecai. Evidence for this fact has been provided by the documents of the business house Murashu & Sons of the time of Artaxerxes I (465-423 BC), which contain sixty-one personal names of Jews. It is extremely interesting to see that although sixty of the sixty-one names refer only to one individual each, six different Jews had the name Mordecai. All of them apparently had been born shortly after the events recorded in the book of Esther had taken place. A little later the name fell into disuse again, as is seen from the fact that among the forty-six names of Jews mentioned in the documents of the same firm from the time of Darius II (423-405/4 BC) the name Mordecai does not appear. Many more conclusions, throwing light on the Mesopotamian Jews, can be drawn from those interesting business documents found at Nippur, but the few observations given here should suffice to show how much direct and indirect evidence we have for one of the most hotly contested books of the Bible.

Other recent discoveries have made us better acquainted with the three enemies of Nehemiah who frustrated his work so much: Sanballat of Samaria, Tobiah of Ammon, and Geshem the Arabian (Nehemiah 2:19). All three of them are mentioned in different ancient documents. Sanballat appears in one of the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine as governor of the Persian province of Samaria in the time of Darius II. This explains why he was such a prominent and dangerous antagonist of the Jews, an antagonist whose opposition Nehemiah could not easily ignore.

From the Bible record it was not known that he was the official governor of Judah's neighboring province. To the contemporary reader of Nehemiah's memoirs this fact was common knowledge and needed no extra mention, but later generations were ignorant of this fact. Since it is now known that he was an influential person, it can better be understood that Nehemiah had to use diplomacy as well as determination in order to continue his work and finish it in the face of such a formidable foe.

Tobiah was the head of a very famous Ammonite family, which is traceable through the history of several centuries. The palace ruins of the family are still visible in Trans Jordan, with the name Tobiah twice inscribed in bold Hebrew letters on the adjoining rock cliffs. The Zenon papyri, found in the Faiyum region of Egypt, which come from the Ptolemaic age, mention one of the Tobiah family as having extensive trade connections with Egypt. Again we see that another of Nehemiah's opponents did not belong to the ordinary citizens of a neighboring country, but to a very influential circle that did not like to see Judah become a strong nation again.

Geshem the Arabian has also recently been identified in a Libyanite inscription from northwestern Arabia, of the fifth century BC. He was an influential chieftain, and with the other enemies of Nehemiah

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was opposed to seeing the Jews regain a powerful status in their homeland. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, the leaders of Judah's northern, eastern, and southern neighbors, apparently feared that the Jews, if left unopposed, might eventually become strong enough to subjugate them as they had done in former times under their kings.

The foregoing examples demonstrate how varied, rich, and informative is the archeological material that sheds light on the Exile and Restoration periods of the Jews. Every pertinent discovery illustrates only minor points of the Biblical record or corroborates single and unimportant phases of the historical narratives. Yet the accumulative evidence is most impressive and supports the claims of the believer in the Bible that that Book is true.

## 10. Manuscript Discoveries Support the Bible Text

CHRIST said in His great discourse concerning the last events preceding His second coming, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). These words have stood the test of centuries. Archeological discoveries not only have produced evidence revealing the accuracy of the historical events narrated in the Bible, but also have brought to light ancient manuscripts of the New and the Old Testament that have demonstrated that the Bible text as we have it today has not been changed or tampered with since the time it came from the hands of its authors.

When Bible criticism flourished in the nineteenth century, most scholars indulged in emending the text of the Old Testament, considering it as highly corrupt. With the help of the Septuagint and other ancient versions, and by taking recourse to much ingenuity and skill, these scholars worked the Bible text over in such a way that in many instances one could hardly recognize the original.

Every theologian considered it the main task of his scholarly activity to separate sources and to discover the different writers and editors that each one of the books of the Old Testament was supposed to have had. It is common knowledge that the higher critics do not attribute the Pentateuch to Moses. In fact, they believe that most of the books of the Old Testament were written just before, during, or after the Babylonian exile. Bibles were printed in the heyday of Bible criticism in which the different authors in each book were indicated by different colors. Several editions of this so-called Polychrome Bible, or Rainbow Bible, were published during the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth.

It is well known that Isaiah was cut into sections by the knife of the Bible critics, who differentiated between two or three Isaiahs, each living far removed from the other in time and space. The book of Daniel, of course, was declared to have been written in the time of the Maccabees, four centuries after Daniel's time, and the book of Ecclesiastes eight centuries after King Solomon's reign. Very few books of the Old Testament escaped this process of scholarly dissection.

How arbitrarily all this work was done, everyone can see who compares two or three critical works on a given Old Testament book. He will find that all the authors of those books declare parts of the text as corrupt, and emendate and "purify" the text according to their ideas, but without agreeing with one another as to which parts are corrupt or late additions. Passages that one scholar declares to be late editorial additions, another one will accept as part of the original text, and in most places where two scholars emendate the same text they come to different conclusions. The result is confusion and bewilderment on the part of the reader who thinks he must accept the verdict of scholars because of their educational background and scholastic standing in the world of higher learning. Instead of doubting the validity of this kind of scholarly activity, he finds his faith shaken in the reliability of the Bible text and questions the merits of basing one's trust on any part of the Old Testament.

New Testament scholars did not want to be left behind their Old Testament colleagues, and although they came later into the fold of Bible critics, they worked nevertheless with the same zeal and determination. Setting aside all traditional views about an apostolic authorship of the New Testament books, they set out to find the real authors. The high light of this critical scholarship is found in the books of Ernest Renan and D. Friedrich Strauss, who considered the life story of Christ a romance. Even the historicity of Christ was doubted by some. The only books of the New Testament that retained their traditional authorship during this period were three letters of Paul. All the other books-Gospels, Epistles, and the Revelation-were at one time or another declared to be Apocryphal writings, which sailed under false flags.

This was the condition that prevailed in most of the European Protestant universities in 1840. At



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that time Konstantin Tischendorf, a young conservative scholar, became professor at the University of Leipzig. During the years of his preparation he had felt that the greatest need in the field of New Testament studies was a text based on older manuscripts than the Textus Receptus, which had been in use since the time of the Reformation, but which was based on rather late and inaccurate Bible manuscripts. He considered it his life task to hunt up the oldest still-existing New Testament manuscripts and publish them, feeling that in this way it could be shown that the text of the Bible had been transmitted without major alterations since the time of Christ and the apostles. Tischendorf as a New Testament scholar carried out this plan, and actually did more for the text of the New Testament during his lifetime than any other man has done since the time of the apostles.

When he began his work, the oldest New Testament manuscript available to Biblical scholars was one of the fifth century the Codex Alexandrinus in the British Museum. All other available New Testament manuscripts were much younger. Hence there was a gap of more than three hundred years between the death of the last apostle and this earliest New Testament manuscript. Tischendorf wanted to reduce this gap by all means, and started out to copy the almost illegible Codex Ephraemi of Paris. He did what no man had been able to do before. Diligently and patiently working for two years over this manuscript, and without sparing his eyesight, which became seriously impaired during this period, he copied and published that text, which was of about the same age as the Codex Alexandrinus. Inasmuch as the Vatican was not willing at that time to allow scholars to use its precious Bible manuscript, the so-called Codex Vaticanus, Tischendorf went to the Near East in search of other ancient manuscripts. He made several journeys through the Orient, searching through old monasteries and church libraries for ancient Bibles. The story is well known and does not need to be repeated-how he saved the Codex Sinaiticus from a wastepaper basket in the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai, where it had been placed to be burned as a worthless old book. He made three trips to that place between the years 1844 and 1859 before he was able to bring that famous manuscript to Europe. It was in Russia for many years, until it was sold in 1933 to the British Museum for \$280,000, where it is now on exhibit.

Tischendorf published about one hundred books during his lifetime, many of them being text publications, and had the satisfaction of seeing his work and that of scholars of like faith succeed in convincing the critical theologians of his time that the New Testament text deserved more confidence than they had been willing to have in it. When he died as a blind man in 1874, the apostolic authority of only three of the New Testament books was seriously questioned any longer. All other books were generally accepted by students of the Bible, with the exception of a few die-hards.

Through the work of Tischendorf the gap between the apostles and the early manuscripts had been narrowed to a little more than two hundred years. Then came the era when Egypt provided hundreds and thousands of Greek papyri, among which were many remains of early Bible manuscripts, some of them of the third century. They have provided us with a wealth of linguistic material that helps us to understand the Greek New Testament better than before.

The greatest discovery with regard to the New Testament was made, however, in 1931, when the so-called Chester Beatty papyri were discovered in Egypt, containing parts of all four of the Gospels and Acts, ten almost complete epistles of Paul, and Revelation. They were written in the early third century AD, and have preserved a New Testament text that is one hundred years closer to the original manuscripts than those known before. The gap between the originals and these manuscripts had shrunk to a little more than one hundred years, and brought us very close to the books that had come from the hands of the apostles. They only confirmed what conservative scholars had believed all the time, that no change of any significance had been made in the Bible text, and that the many variations which are found between the different Bible manuscripts concerned only details of spelling, grammar, and little scribal mistakes so commonly made when books had to be copied by hand during many centuries.

One of the books whose apostolic origin had not generally been accepted as yet was the Gospel According to St. John. The majority of New Testament scholars were inclined to ascribe this Gospel to someone who lived in the middle of the second century AD or later, but not to the apostle John. The first evidence to shake this wrong assumption came to light when a fragment of an unknown gospel written in the first half of the second century was found to contain quotations from the fourth Gospel. This discovery proved that the Gospel According to St. John was known in Egypt during the first half of the second century AD. When this fragment was published in 1935, scholars realized that they might have to revise their opinion regarding the Gospel According to St. John.

Only a few weeks later another even more sensational find furnished the evidence that John was written in the apostolic age. A little scrap of papyrus containing only a few verses of John 18 was

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discovered in the John Rylands Library at Manchester, England, into whose possession it had come several years previously. The importance of this little fragment lay in its date. The papyrologists agreed that this leaf from the Gospel According to St. John had been written in Egypt, where it was found, in the beginning of the second century, hence was the earliest manuscript of the New Testament in existence. If the Gospel According to St. John was already known and copied shortly after 100 AD in Egypt, it must have been in circulation for some time. To find its way to the Nile country from Asia Minor, where it was written according to early tradition, must have taken some time. Therefore, it is only reasonable to conclude that John's Gospel was written before the end of the first century AD, namely, in the apostolic age. Since that time a number of famous scholars like Deissmann, Dibelius, Kenyon, and Goodspeed, have declared themselves in favor of an apostolic origin of the fourth Gospel.

It is certainly providential that this earliest document of any New Testament book in our possession at the present time came from a disputed Bible book and not from one whose apostolic origin was already accepted by the scholarly world. For example, if this fragment had contained a portion of the letter to the Romans, it would have had only sentimental value, and would have proved merely what everyone believed anyway, since no critic questioned the Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Romans. There is only one other discovery that would equal the finding of the John Rylands fragment of the Gospel of John, and that would be an early manuscript containing the second epistle of Peter, or portions of it, since its apostolic authorship is still very much doubted by New Testament scholars.

Looking back over the discoveries of New Testament manuscripts that have come to light during the past century, one can only marvel at the remarkable vindication the New Testament text has experienced. Every new discovery has narrowed down the gap that existed a hundred years ago between the apostolic age and the time when the earliest extant New Testament manuscripts were written; and now we are in the fortunate position of possessing New Testament manuscripts that were produced very soon after the apostolic age. Critical scholars have been forced to retreat step by step by these new discoveries, which show that the text of the original writers has faithfully been transmitted, and that it has come into our hands essentially in the form in which it left the hands of the authors. On the other hand, these discoveries have materially strengthened the confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible text of those readers who did not give up their faith in God's Word.

## **11. The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Old Testament**

UP TO 1948, when the first news of the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls reached the world, the manuscript discoveries of the past hundred years had done much to put the higher critics to shame as far as the New Testament was concerned, but no ancient manuscripts had ever come to light supporting the trustworthiness of the text of the Old Testament.

The reason for the absence of ancient Hebrew manuscripts was twofold: (1) the Jewish wars of the first and second centuries and the ensuing persecutions of Jews in many lands, causing the destruction of old Jewish literature; and (2) an old Jewish regulation that worn-out Bible manuscripts were not to be kept indefinitely, to prevent profanation. Bible manuscripts were sacred, since they contained the names of God, and whenever one was worn out, or its reading became illegible, it was placed in a receptacle in the synagogue, called a genizab. Such a genizah might be only a box in a small synagogue or a room in a larger one. Whenever a prominent member of the synagogue died, one of these discarded Bible scrolls was put in his coffin, and in this way disintegrated, and was lost forever.

For these two reasons, the Jewish wars and persecutions and the practice of discarding old Bible manuscripts, none of the famous Hebrew books of the time of Christ or the early centuries of the Christian Era have survived.

Before the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls the earliest Hebrew manuscript containing any part of the Old Testament was not older than one thousand years. This left a gap of almost fifteen hundred years between the latest originals—for example Nehemiah or Malachi—and their earliest copies then available. Old Testament scholars had been resigned for a long time to the fact that they would never be so fortunate as their New Testament colleagues were. The late Sir Frederic Kenyon, the great British expert in Bible manuscripts, voiced this pessimistic resignation by saying: "There is, indeed, no probability that we shall ever find manuscripts of the Hebrew text going back to a period before the formation of the text which we know as Massoretic." *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (4th ed., New York, 1951), p. 48.

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Old Testament scholars naturally envied their New Testament friends for their good fortune in possessing manuscripts that were close to the originals, but knew that they could not expect similar discoveries that would support the Old Testament text, since the discoveries that had provided so much proof for the accuracy of the New Testament text had failed completely to furnish anything similar to prove the authenticity of the text of the Old Testament.

Critics contended that much had happened to the Old Testament text during the many centuries lying between the time when the original books were written and the period from which our oldest manuscripts came, a time interval of fourteen hundred to twenty-five hundred years, depending on which book one referred to. Critical scholars emended the text, therefore, to restore it, according to their opinions, while conservative theologians maintained that God had preserved the text uncorrupted up to the present day. The scholars of one class built their arguments on reasoning; the others on faith. Neither had scientific proof for their views.

A great discovery, made during the year 1947, changed this situation completely. This discovery, held by Prof. W. F. Albright to be the greatest manuscript find of all time, took place in the following way.

A goatherd tending his flocks in the bare and rocky mountain desert of Judea near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea noticed a new hole in the otherwise familiar mountainside, and guessed rightly that one of the many hidden caves had been opened up by the frequent earthquakes occurring in that region. He threw a stone into the cave, and upon hearing the sound of shattering pottery concealed inside, fled in fear. Later, fortified by a friend, he gained enough courage to return and examine the contents of the new cave. The two men found a few well-preserved jars and a number of leather scrolls wrapped in linen. They took the scrolls to Bethlehem and showed them to their Moslem priest, who, thinking that they were Syrian manuscripts, advised the finders to sell them to the Syrian monastery in Jerusalem. In this way four of the best-preserved scrolls came into the hands of the metropolitan of St. Mark's Monastery. The rest, three scrolls in a much poorer state of preservation, were bought by the late Prof. E. L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University.

Several scholars who saw these manuscripts in the Syrian monastery did not believe in their authenticity, and declared them to be forgeries, until the scrolls were shown to Dr. John C. Trever, the acting director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, in February, 1948. Trever, upon seeing the manuscripts, was impressed by their apparent antiquity and believed in their authenticity when he compared them with the Nash Papyrus, a Hebrew document of the first or second century BC containing the Decalogue and the words of Deuteronomy 6A, 5. Before the Syrians took the priceless manuscripts to a safe place outside the country, he immediately took photographs of all manuscripts, since they might be destroyed in the battle for Jerusalem, which at that time raged between the Arabs and Jews. Before releasing this discovery to the press, Trever sent photographs to Professor Albright of Baltimore, one of the greatest authorities on ancient Semitic texts. His trained eye immediately recognized that these manuscripts were genuine, a judgment that in the meantime has proved to be correct, although a few stubborn scholars are still unconvinced that the scrolls are authentic.

When this find became known to the government of the Kingdom of Jordan, in whose territory the cave lies, a search was made to find the cave and excavate it. As soon as it was found, G. Lankester Harding and Pere R. de Vaux, two very able archeologists, excavated the cave with much care. They found that a clandestine excavation by natives had already taken place, but were nevertheless able to recover hundreds of broken pieces of the jars that originally had contained the manuscripts, including their lids, and many pieces of linen in which the documents had been wrapped. Some hundreds of little manuscript fragments were also recovered. Palestine's humid climate is ill suited to the preservation of perishable material such as manuscripts, but the cave in which these manuscripts came to light is situated in the stainless desert of Judea, which is absolutely dry. This fact accounts for the good state of preservation in which several of the scrolls were found.

Professor de Vaux has succeeded in restoring many of the forty big jars of which fragments have been recovered. Two of the jars, taken out of the cave undamaged by the original discoverers, are now in the possession of the Hebrew University. Some of the jars, reconstructed from numerous fragments into which they were broken, have found their way into the leading museums of Europe and America. All of them, archeologists tell us, were made during the Roman period, before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The great number of jars found in the cave is an indication that originally about two hundred different scrolls had been stored away in this hiding place. Inasmuch as less than ten were found in different stages of preservation, the question immediately arises: What has become of the other scrolls since

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they were deposited in the cave, probably during the first century AD. The condition in which the cave was found has given the answer to this question, indicating that intruders had visited it during ancient times and removed the greatest part of this library. Furthermore, the hundreds of scroll fragments, which originally had belonged to many different Biblical and extra-Biblical books, brought to light by the excavation of the cave prove that a great library had once been stored away in this cave.

Further excavations of the neighboring ancient settlement of Kkirbet Qumran have revealed that the people who deposited their library in this hiding place during the first Jewish war, AD 66-70, were Essenes, members of an ascetic Jewish sect. We have also a little evidence concerning an intruder of a later age who removed some of these manuscripts. Eusebius tells us that the church father Origen used for his monumental work, the Hexapla, an ancient manuscript of the Psalms that recently had been discovered in a jar near Jericho. The first excavators of the cave thought, therefore, that Origen or some of his contemporaries had discovered the cave and removed its contents, for the most part.

It is more probable, however, that the cave was robbed of its precious contents during the eighth century, as pointed out by Prof. Otto Eissfeldt, who drew the attention of scholars to a letter of the Nestorian Patriarch Timotheus of Seleucia. He tells of having heard about the discovery of Hebrew manuscripts in a rock house near Jericho, and that the Jews had removed these books to Jerusalem. In his letter he asks a friend to find out for him whether the recently discovered scrolls supported the Old Testament quotations given in the New Testament better than the known Hebrew text did, adding that this problem burned as fire in his heart. The discovery of which Timotheus had heard was presumably responsible for the disappearance of the majority of scrolls that had originally been hidden in the cave. Although we deplore the fact that so many of the manuscripts once stored away in the cave have been lost, we are most grateful that some were overlooked, which have thus been preserved for us.

The dating of these manuscripts is one of the most important items of scholarly investigation. Some of the best paleographers of ancient Semitic texts—Albright, Birnbaum, Sukenik, and others—have dated these scrolls as ranging from the fourth century BC to the first century of the Christian Era on the basis of the script employed. The archeologists have dated them according to the age of the jars, which led them to the conclusion that they are not later than the first century AD, as previously stated. Some scholars, however, were doubtful about the early date of these scrolls, and dated them into the Christian or the medieval period. One declared them to be forgeries. These doubts have all been invalidated by later discoveries, a discussion of which follows.

In the meantime the scientific method of dating ancient original material by its radiocarbon contents has been perfected, so that material as early as 2000 BC can be dated by this process with a great measure of accuracy. Lankester Harding, the director of the Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan, one of the excavators of the cave, sent enough of the linen wrapping material to America to subject it to the scientific dating process known as the “Carbon 14” method. The date of the linen wrappings obtained by the Nuclear Institute of the University of Chicago is AD 33, with a margin of error on either side up to two hundred years, which gives a range for the manufacture of the linen wrappers from 168 BC to AD 233. This evidence shows that the scholars who dated the scrolls in the pre-Christian period and the first century AD seem to be correct, and more and more scholars have given up their doubts about the early date of these manuscripts. Today there are less than a handful who doubt any longer either their genuineness or their early dates.

A review of the discovery of these manuscripts, their dates, and the history of the cave itself having been given, a description of the now-famous scrolls is in place.

The first scroll that was recognized by Dr. Trever when the manuscripts were brought to him by the Syrians was one containing the complete book of Isaiah. This scroll has since those spring days in 1948 become very famous. It is in an almost perfect state of preservation and contains the complete text of Isaiah from the first to the last verse. It was published in 1950 in photographic reproduction, with a transliteration into modern Hebrew characters, giving to Bible scholars this precious manuscript in a form worthy of its importance.

Another scroll contains a commentary on the first and second chapter of Habakkuk, quoting each passage of this minor prophet and then explaining it. In this way two thirds of this prophetic book is also extant in a text form of the pre-Christian period. One scroll contains a Manual of Discipline in force among the Jewish sect or community to which this library once belonged. That the owners of the books were Essenes has now been established by excavations in that region, especially of Kkirbet Qumran, the sect's center. One book contains a collection of hymns similar to the book of Psalms. Another one describes a “War Between the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness,” but it is not known to which historical

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war this manuscript refers. One very battered scroll contains the last half of Isaiah, so that two manuscripts of the same Biblical book have been provided by the discovery of the cave scrolls.

One manuscript is in a very precarious state of preservation, and has not yet been unrolled (1955). However, a few scraps of the outer layer have been peeled off. They reveal that it is written in Aramaic, whereas all the other scrolls are written in Hebrew. The few words that can be read on the peeled-off pieces seem to show that the manuscript contains the long-lost Apocryphal book of Lamech.

Besides these more-or-less-well-preserved scrolls, many fragments of other books were recovered from the cave, as mentioned before. They are the remnants of books that had once been stored in the cave, but had been removed in later times. We have several fragments of the book of Daniel, including the verses in which the Hebrew switches over to Aramaic. The Daniel fragments are very important, because scholars have maintained that Daniel was not written before the second century BC, although we have here the remnants of a scroll of Daniel that comes from that very period, if the dating of the specialists is accepted.

Fragments of the books of Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Judges have also been found, and of many books that have not yet been identified. The few fragments from the book of Leviticus are of the utmost importance, since they are written in the Hebrew pre-exilic script. We know that the Hebrews switched from their ancient script over to the Aramaic square script shortly after the Exile; according to Jewish tradition, during the time of E= . For a time the two kinds of script were used side by side, until the Aramaic square script completely replaced the pre-exilic script, which in later times was used only on Hebrew coins. For this reason Professor de Vaux dated the Leviticus fragments in the fourth or fifth century BC, although other scholars, among them Dr. Albright, think that they come from a more recent copy made during the second century BC, reasoning that the scribe had an ancient copy before him and wanted to retain the old venerable script. It will be difficult to decide who is correct, but it is nevertheless very important to have a few fragments of a Bible manuscript written in a form in which it must have appeared in the period before the Exile. A comparison between the text preserved by these fragments and the present day Hebrew text shows that it is exactly the same text.

The pike de resistance of the whole collection of manuscripts preserved is the Isaiah scroll. The material is leather; the length of the scroll is about twenty-four feet, and the width eleven inches. The sixty-six chapters of the book are written in fifty-four columns in a very even and beautiful hand. With the exception of the last column, which has suffered much through heavy use of the book in ancient times, and whose script has therefore been partly re inked, the writing is easily readable and presents few difficulties of decipherment. There are only a few gaps in the first few columns, where part of the lower edge has been torn away. The scribe made a number of mistakes and omissions. When he discovered them he wrote the missing parts between the lines and sometimes into the margin. In a number of places the omissions escaped him, especially in portions where he skipped a phrase or a group of words that lay between two identical words. Isaiah 16:8, 9 is one example. In each of the verses, 8 and 9, the word "Sibmah" appears. After the scribe had written the first "Sibmah," his eye skipped all the remaining phrases between the first and the second "Sibmah" and fell on the second one; thus he recorded the word "Sibmah" only once. This scribal error is known to every ancient and modern copyist.

Since the photographic reproduction of this very valuable document has appeared, numerous articles and several books have been written on the Isaiah scroll. Its text proves that since the time this copy was written, probably in the second century BC or in the first, the book of Isaiah has not experienced any change. The scribe certainly was not a very careful copyist, and made numerous orthographic mistakes, but they do not affect the contents. It is also possible that he wrote his copy down as it was dictated to him by a reader. This would explain the many instances in which he confused similar sounding words that he would hardly have confused if he had seen the manuscript from which he was copying. The confusion can be compared with the interchanging of the English words "to rain" and "to reign," or "see" and "sea."

Furthermore, the Isaiah scroll reflects a period when spelling was somewhat different from that in use during the time of the Masoretes, who, several centuries later, added to the text its vowels and gave it its standard orthographic form. This fact accounts for several thousand additional consonants, which, however, have no bearing at all on the meaning of the text. Everyone who has worked with this scroll has been profoundly impressed by the unmistakable fact that this two-thousand-year-old Bible manuscript contains exactly the same text we possess today. Passages that present difficulties of interpretation in our present-day Hebrew Bible, such as Isaiah 65:20, have the same difficult text in the Isaiah scroll. A few testimonies from recognized scholars will show how much impressed they have been with the fact that our present Hebrew text shows so few differences from the text that is more than two thousand years old.

Prof. Millar Burrows, the editor of the Isaiah scroll, has given us several studies on this text, and

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because of his intimate knowledge of the Isaiah manuscript, his judgment is of great importance. He says:

“With the exception of . . . relatively unimportant omissions to be noted below, the whole book is here, and it is substantially the book preserved in the Masoretic text. Differing notably in orthography and somewhat in morphology, it agrees with the Masoretic text to a remarkable degree in wording. Herein lies its chief importance, supporting the fidelity of the Masoretic tradition.

“There are minor omissions, but nothing comparable with those found in the Septuagint of some of the books of the Old Testament.”-“Variant Readings in the Isaiah Manuscript” in *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, No. 111 (October, 1948), pp. 16, 17.

Professor Albright, who was one of the first to recognize the great importance of this manuscript, made the following remark about the faithfulness with which the ancient text has been handed down through the centuries:

It cannot be insisted too strongly that the Isaiah Scroll proves the great antiquity of the text of the Masoretic Book, warning us against the light-hearted emendation in which we used to indulge.”-“The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark’s Monastery” in *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, No. 118 (April, 1950), p. 6.

Prof. John Bright, referring to this scroll, is convinced that very few of the textual emendations that have been made in the course of the past century can be seriously accepted any longer since the Isaiah scroll has proved how accurately the ancient text has been handed down to us. He advises the present generation of Bible scholars to learn how to develop a critical attitude toward commentaries written in the past, and states that if no critical attitude toward these scholarly works were exercised, their users would find themselves interpreting a text that never existed except in the commentator’s mind (*Interpretation*, vol. 6 [1952], pp. 116, 117).

It is certainly providential that God has preserved for this generation these texts and given them to us in this crucial time in the history of this world. Fifty years ago it was unthinkable that critical scholars holding honored chairs in leading universities of the land, such as the men quoted in the preceding paragraphs’ would have defended the Old Testament text as they are doing today.

The Isaiah scrolls, the Habakkuk commentary, and the fragments of the other Biblical books have provided us with texts of some Old Testament books from the time of Christ and the apostles. No book of Scripture, with the exception of the Psalms, was quoted by Christ and the New Testament authors as much as Isaiah. They accepted every part of it as God’s Word, and as written by Isaiah, the prophet, making no differences between any sections of it. Their judgment should be sufficiently authoritative for us to accept what they accepted. Inasmuch as the Isaiah scroll reveals that the text, which was accepted as part of God’s inspired word in the time of the New Testament authors, is the same text we have in our Bible, our confidence in the Scriptures has been deeply strengthened.

The study of the Isaiah scroll and the other extant ancient texts entitles us to conclude by analogy that the books of the Old Testament of which no ancient copies have yet been found, were handed down to us in just as pure a form and just as faithfully as those for which we have some old texts now.

## 12. Additional Manuscript Discoveries Confirm the Bible Text

WHEN the native Bedouins of the Dead Sea region realized that scholars were willing to pay high prices for ancient manuscripts, and even for small fragments, and that a treasure hunt in the caves of Judea’s wilderness might be more profitable than raising flocks, they began an intensive search in the numerous caves of the mountainous desert bordering on the Dead Sea. This resulted in the discovery of further caves containing ancient documents, in the years 1951 and 1952. Late in 1951 fragments of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts were offered for sale to the French Ecole Biblique and the Department of Antiquities in Jerusalem. They came from some inaccessible caves in the Wadi Murabbaat, lying eleven miles south, of Kbirbet Qumrjn, in whose neighborhood the first great manuscript discovery had been made in 1947. When these newly found caves were then excavated by competent archeologists in January and February, 1952, household utensils discovered there led to the conclusion that the Jews had used them as dwelling places during the revolt of AD 132-135 against the Romans.

The excavators found not only secular documents like Greek, contracts, of which one is dated in the seventh year of Hadrian (AD 124), but also Hebrew fragments of Bible books, such as Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah. Furthermore, they discovered a complete phylactery, a strip of leather inscribed

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with Bible texts, which pious Jews wore on their forehead or wrist (see Matthew 23:5). There also came to light letters written by Bar Chocheba, the leader of the Jewish rebellion against the Romans (luring the years AD 132-135). Besides these letters written to officers of the Jewish army, there were also several proclamations of Bar Chocheba's government.

Hardly was the work at Wadi Murabba'at completed when news was received in Jerusalem that Bedouins had made another discovery of manuscripts near the first cave at Qumrdn. A new expedition, jointly sponsored by the Ecole Biblique, the Palestine Museum, and the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, thoroughly investigated some forty caves and crevices in the region of Kbirbet Qumran during four weeks in the spring of 1952, with the result that additional manuscript discoveries were made. The Biblical books represented in this new find were fragments of Exodus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Psalms, and two manuscripts of Ruth. Also, some fragments of Leviticus came to light, which are written in pre-exilic Hebrew. Non-Biblical documents in Hebrew and Aramaic were also found by the expedition.

The greatest discovery, however, consisted in two tightly rolled sheets of copper. They have a total length of about eight feet and are one foot wide, inscribed with Hebrew letters. Since the metal is completely oxidized, it has been impossible to unroll the sheets and read the text. The letters visible on the outer layer seem to indicate that these copper sheets contain official decrees. They may have covered large gates or pillars in a monumental building, probably in the community hall of the Qumran sect of the Essenes, who had also been the owners of the large library stored in the cave from which the famous Isaiah scroll has come. The inscribed copper sheets had probably been taken down, rolled up, and removed to the cave in which they were found, as a place of safety during a time of emergency, perhaps at the time when the first Jewish revolt began, in AD 66. This leads to the conclusion that these sheets must have been considered of great value to their owners, and the scholarly world is anxiously waiting to see what secrets the texts inscribed on the metal sheets will reveal.

Experiments are being made at the present time in the laboratories of the Johns Hopkins University, at Baltimore, Maryland, to develop a process by which corroded copper can be deoxidized. If the experiments are successful, so that the oxygen can be withdrawn from oxidized copper, and the plates once more transformed into sheets of pure and pliable copper, the two rolls will be sent to America to be processed. If the experiments should prove to be unsuccessful, the scrolls will have to be sawed into strips, with some loss of material in order to enable scholars to decipher and read the text.

Shortly after the expedition that made this sensational discovery had done its work, other manuscripts were found by Bedouins in a cave whose location has not yet been discovered by archeologists. Among the manuscripts were found more fragments of Genesis, Numbers, the Psalms, and a complete phylactery. There were also parts of a Greek version of the Minor Prophets written between AD 70 and 135, and a Hebrew letter written to Simeon ben Kosibah, i.e., Bar Chocheba. Two Aramaic contracts are dated to "the third year of the liberation of Israel in the name of Simeon ben Kosibah." Other Greek and Aramaic documents are dated in the era of the province Arabia. It was also a great surprise that a group of Nabataean papyri was discovered in some caves, because hardly any literary texts of the Nabataeans-the successors of the Edomites-have been known so far.

The latest great discovery was made, again by Bedouins, in the autumn of 1952. A cave lying just below the ruins of Khirbet Qumran was found that contained great treasures of manuscripts. Fortunately, news of this find reached archeologists in Jerusalem before the treasure was completely removed, and important parts of the documents were secured during the ensuing scientific excavation. They consisted of fragments belonging to at least one hundred different works, Biblical and non-Biblical. Although no complete scrolls were found, the importance of this latest discovery exceeds all previous ones, including that of the first cave.

It has seemed almost incredible that a barren region of Palestine, in which no archeological discoveries had ever been made, would furnish so much important material. However, only a dry region, such as the wilderness of Judea, which has practically no rainfall, could preserve manuscripts written on perishable material like leather or papyrus, which in every other part of Palestine would long ago have rotted away. The fact is that from the caves of the desert of Judah so many manuscripts have been extracted that now all Old Testament books are represented in manuscripts dating from before the time of Christ to the second century of the Christian Era. This does not mean that complete texts of these Bible books have been discovered, with the exception of Isaiah. In fact, some Bible books are represented among the Dead Sea scrolls by only small fragments. However, even little fragments can have great value in showing whether the Bible text known to us conforms with text sections preserved in these newly discovered ancient

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manuscripts.

Several scholars are working on these texts to prepare them for publication. Some samples have already been published. They show that the Old Testament has come down to us through the centuries in a practically unchanged form. It is true that numerous variations are found in these manuscripts-variant spellings, omissions of words and phrases, different grammatical constructions-but in all essentials the text of our Bible is the text of the Bible that existed in the time of Christ. Even passages that are difficult to understand in the common Hebrew Bible text offer the same difficulties in the Bible manuscripts of the pre-Christian era which we now possess.

These facts have been a great surprise to those scholars and theologians who have held for a long time that our Bible text had experienced radical changes before the Jewish Masoretes fixed the Hebrew text in the eighth century or the ninth century of the Christian Era. Some have declared these newly found texts to be forgeries or medieval documents in spite of all evidence pointing to their genuineness and high age. Such an unwillingness to accept these texts as early evidence for the reliability of our Old Testament text finds its reason in the fact that these scholars seem to hate to change their previously published views regarding the degree of accuracy with which the Bible text has been transmitted throughout the ages.

Many honest scholars, however, have readily admitted that these newly discovered texts show that the Bible deserves a greater respect than many have been willing to give it. This is a matter of great joy to the lover of the Bible and to those Christians who have always believed that they could completely trust the Scriptures in the form they possess. The phenomenal discoveries of the last few years have revealed the hand of Providence. That all this ancient material should have been hidden in remote caves of an almost uninhabited desert to be brought to light in these latter days must have a purpose. It is a matter of gratitude and joy to see these ancient Bible manuscripts declare the reliability of God's Word in a time of increasing unbelief, when concerted efforts are being made in many quarters to destroy the faith of Christians in the basis of their faith, the Holy Scriptures. And it is extremely satisfying to see how every new discovery establishes the truth of a statement made many centuries ago by the prophet Isaiah, "The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8).