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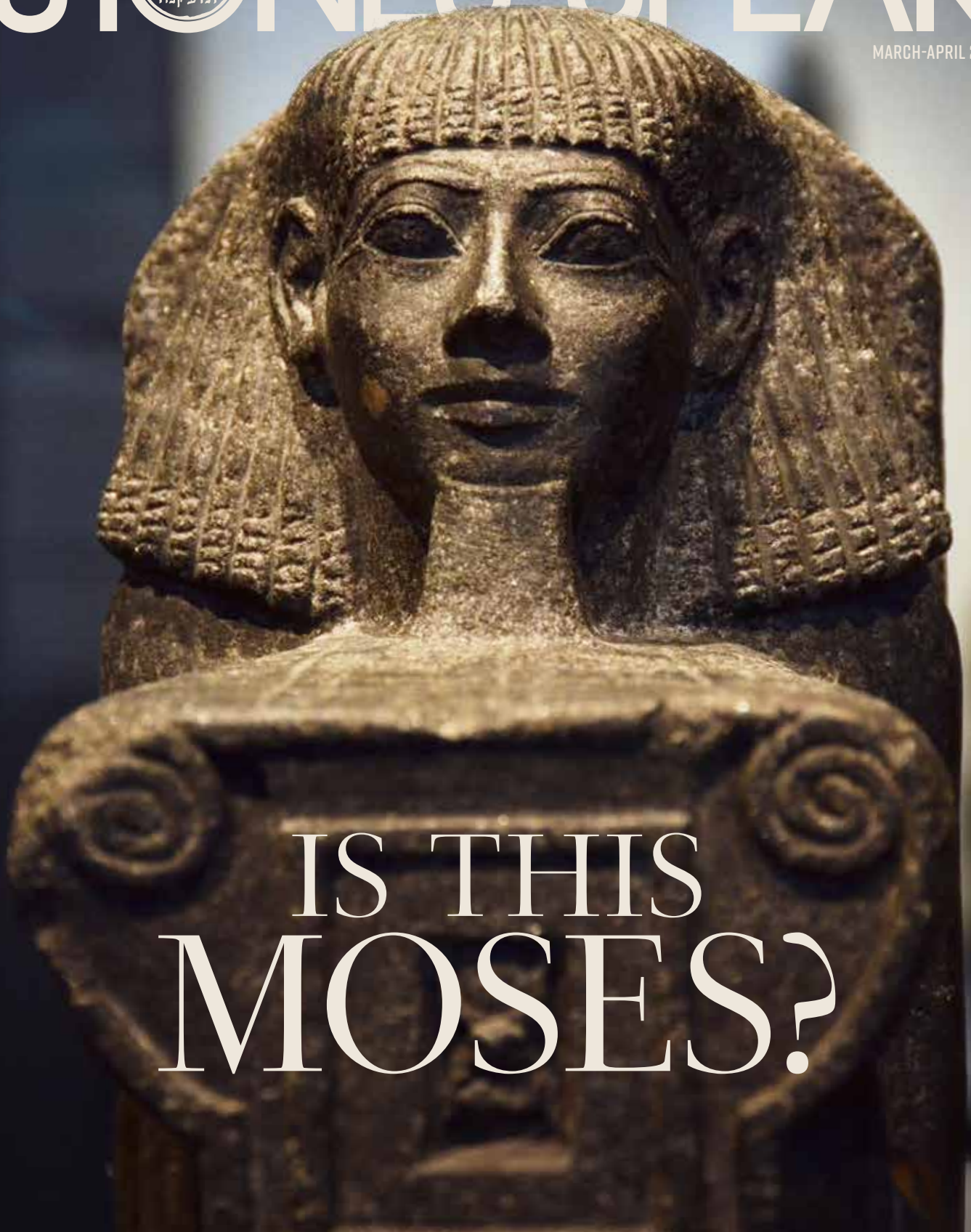
ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The magazine of the

STONES SPEAK



MARCH-APRIL 2024

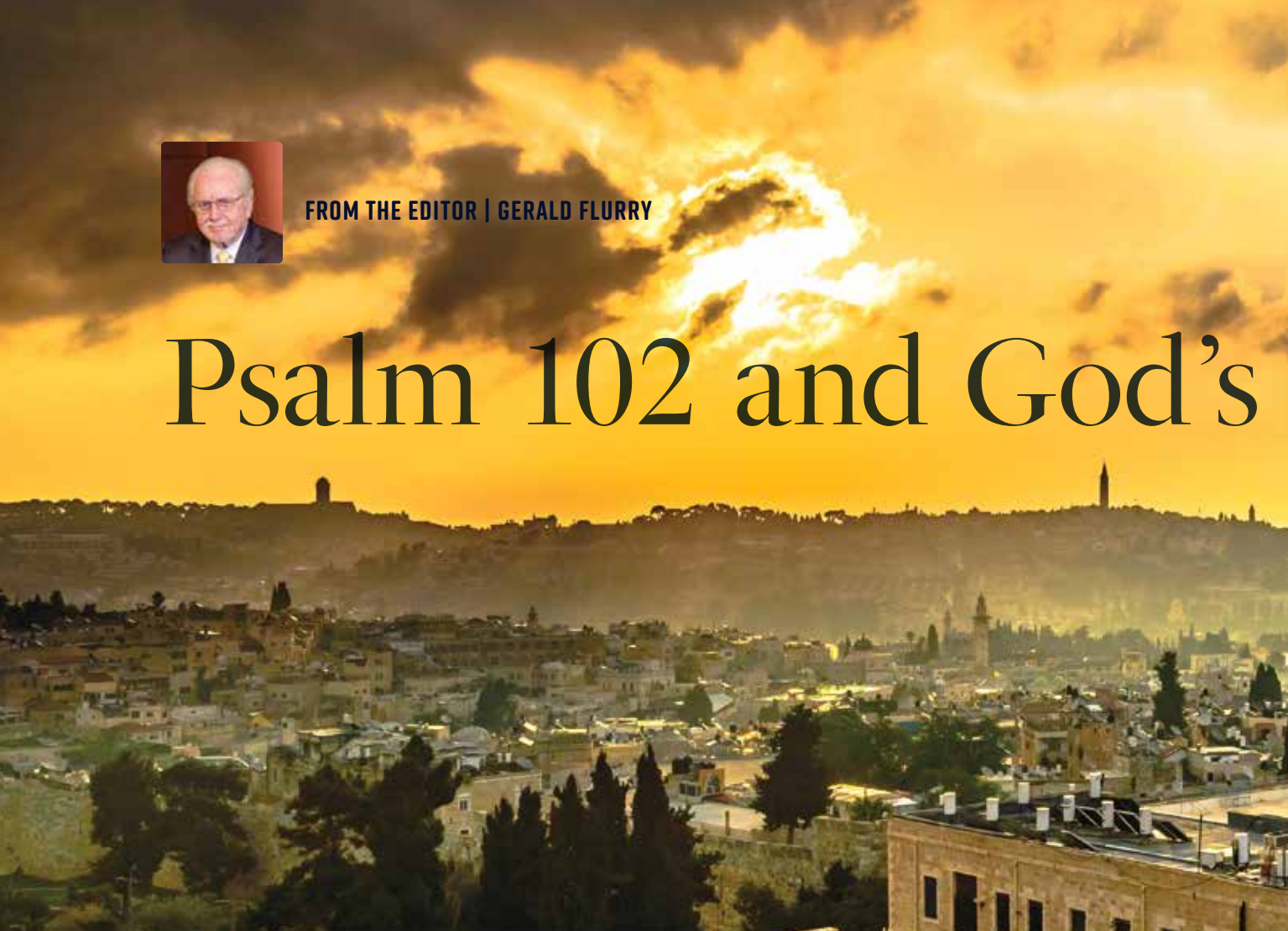


IS THIS  
MOSES?



FROM THE EDITOR | GERALD FLURRY

# Psalm 102 and God's



## LET THE STONES SPEAK

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FROM THE EDITOR

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**I**N 1967, I BEGAN ATTENDING AMBASSADOR COLLEGE, which was established by the late Herbert W. Armstrong. That was the year of Israel's Six-Day War with its Arab neighbors, when the Jewish nation captured the Old City of Jerusalem. After the war, Prof. Benjamin Mazar from Hebrew University united with Mr. Armstrong and Ambassador College to begin the most significant excavation ever undertaken in Israel. It was explosive and huge; there had been nothing like it before.

They began what most of them called the "big dig." Mr. Armstrong said it was a great honor to be part of the big dig. After Mr. Armstrong and Professor Mazar (who were great friends) died, Dr. Eilat Mazar took over the excavations. We began helping her in 2006.

We too look upon our archaeological activities in Jerusalem as a great honor and, really, a responsibility. And we are honored to work on great projects, like the "Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered" exhibit.



# Biblical Archaeology

Benjamin Mazar said, “Pour over the Bible again and again, for it contains within it descriptions of genuine, historical reality.” He passed this view on to his granddaughter, and she followed that example.

I want to refer to one psalm and a few verses in the Bible that I think are very important, about digging into the dirt and the stones. This is from the Jewish Publication Society of America Bible, according to the Masoretic Text. Psalm 102 is about biblical archaeology. And it’s also about the coming of the Messiah, which is connected. There are two subjects here. I was recently studying this, and I think there’s quite a lot here that we need to understand.

Psalm 102:13-15 read, “But Thou, O Lord, sittest enthroned for ever; And Thy name is unto all generations. Thou wilt arise, and have compassion upon Zion; For it is time to be gracious unto her, for the appointed time is come. For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, And love her dust.” This is about God’s servants

getting into biblical archaeology. “So the nations will fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the Earth Thy glory. When the Lord hath built up Zion, When He hath appeared in His glory” (verses 16-17).

If it’s talking about the Messiah coming, then you know this is talking about the latter days. That is part of the “appointed time,” as we read there.

People have a lot of different reasons for why they’re into archaeology. And that’s certainly fine. But I have to say, I have always had a different reason for studying archaeology than most people.

If you look closely at Psalm 102, it’s not just about biblical archaeology, it’s about God’s archaeology. It’s not just “biblical archaeology,” but God’s biblical archaeology. And this is something that ends with the coming of the Messiah. That’s what it says in the Hebrew Bible. Quite a few people are aware of that coming.

Mr. Armstrong said that this coming of the Messiah will be the greatest event ever to occur in the universe!

So we are talking about something huge in importance—something we really need to think about.

The deeper you get into this, the deeper the vision you can have. And the more you understand it, the more excited you are about it and the more you see that it's not something insignificant. This is a super, monumental vision of hope. Regardless of how bad world conditions become—and there will be serious problems in this end time—this psalm makes it clear: This is a vision of hope! There really is a great hope if you follow through on this archaeology.

When I look back on Dr. Eilat Mazar and all her discoveries, I just don't see anybody who has found what she has in the city of Jerusalem. And I think that's significant.

I believe this all fits into God's plan. I think God had a part in helping Eilat Mazar do what she did. We worked with her for more than 15 years. She was a unique person; you couldn't find anyone else quite like her doing archaeology. She was a marvelous teacher; we learned so much from her.

Look at the progression in these verses. Verse 14 says, "Thou wilt arise, and have compassion upon Zion," and this leads on into us taking "pleasure in her stones ... and dust," and so on. Then verse 17 says, "When the Lord hath built up Zion," and this is tied to "[w]hen He hath appeared in His glory," which refers to the coming of the Messiah. As you look at this more, you see these two subjects are unusually tied together. You have to ask, why are biblical archaeology and the coming of the Messiah connected? Well, it's really God's biblical archaeology, and the coming of the Messiah is brought into all of this. In the Hebrew Bible you can certainly see these truths, and these two subjects are tied together.

In fact, in verse 17—"When the Lord hath built up Zion, When He hath appeared in His glory"—both subjects are in this one verse: God's biblical archaeology and the coming of the Messiah. These two subjects are just really close. Why is that? There is a reason.

We are in the latter days, and God says this is the appointed time. God makes clear that this psalm is going to be understood in this appointed time, a time in the latter days. When the Messiah is coming, you know that's in the last days. But there is a hope that just overwhelms everything if you look at what this is really talking about. It is inspiring and moving. It's the greatest event that will ever occur in the universe. That certainly inspires me.

Notice what Dr. Mazar said about the ancient structures in Jerusalem: "I am interested in history, not just about stones. I am interested in stones that can speak. I don't care about stones that have nothing to talk about, that are speechless. Who cares about speechless stones?" That's an archaeologist talking there! You don't hear too much talk like that today. She often said, "Let the stones



speak!" These servants take pleasure in the stones. And the more you understand about the coming of the Messiah, the more you are going to be excited about those stones!

The servants take pleasure in them and love being in the dust because of that vision that we all need in this life—that hope that we all need in a hopeless world. And it is real. The reality becomes clearer and clearer, and motivating like nothing else could motivate you.

Let the stones speak! Does that sound odd? Well, if you look at this psalm, *God Himself* says the stones are speaking. These stones are speaking! So this is not just an archaeologist saying that. This is a big subject. And the more you get into it, the more you see it. And I've been in it a long time, starting way back in 1967 when I went to college.

There are still some rough times coming. The Hebrew Bible in several places tells us about what happens just before the coming of the Messiah. So the vision just continues to grow.

Verse 22 says, "That men may tell of the name of the Lord in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem." If you look at this in context, you can see that God is putting emphasis on what's happening in Jerusalem. That is important because when the Messiah comes, He is going to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem. So I think that makes sense, and it's logical that it would be that way.

There are many biblical archaeologists who do outstanding work and have made outstanding discoveries all over Israel. Some of them are just truly outstanding. But it does seem to me in every way that God says to put the emphasis on Jerusalem. And that's where Eilat Mazar really rises and shines! Nobody compares to what she achieved, as far as I'm concerned. They just simply have not. She dug almost solely in Jerusalem, a very rich place to dig.



Eilat Mazar  
with her  
grandfather  
Benjamin Mazar

The Prophet Isaiah even talked about God “planting the heavens,” and that’s the universe. This work from Jerusalem is going to be reaching out into the universe and to everything there is. It’s the most exciting and wonderful vision and work that you could ever understand. And I’ve been studying this for a long time.

Both of these come at the same time. You can find the truth about the coming of the Messiah in probably a hundred passages or more in the Hebrew Bible.

In a 2005 article, Rachel Ginsberg wrote about Dr. Mazar and her archaeology. She recognized the significance of Dr. Mazar’s palace of David discovery. She wrote, “Dr. Eilat Mazar, world authority on Jerusalem’s past, has taken King David out of the pages of the Bible, and put him back into living history. Mazar’s latest excavation in the City of David, in the southern shadow of the Temple Mount, has shaken up the archaeological world.” I think this lady sees that the stones are shouting aloud! They are really speaking! And what a message this all leads to. That is what Psalm 102 is all about. God really wants us to get into it by looking to David and learning from him. Let the stones speak!

We all need to come into this living history and bring everything alive in the Bible. Certainly, when it comes to history, Dr. Eilat Mazar and her grandfather were going around with a Bible in their hand and being guided by that history. And look at all that Dr. Mazar discovered. She taught us so much. She knew about digging for artifacts and discoveries. And did she ever find a large number of them! You can see that in our exhibit, and we hope you’ll really look at it closely.

Look into David’s life. He has the longest biography in all the Bible. When David came into Jerusalem, he conquered the Jebusites. That city had been associated with great men of God, back to Abraham and Melchizedek. So David fought for God. And he fought like nobody in Israel, it seems. He really did love God. He made his mistakes, but he turned his life around. And he has a great, great reward in the near future.

Dr. Mazar talked about David’s palace being attached to the Stepped Stone Structure. The fact that “the two structures were part of the same construction was an astonishing discovery for us,” she wrote. “Laid before our very eyes was a structure massive in proportions and innovative in complexity.” This was a royal palace!

She wrote: “It bears witness to the impressive architectural skill and considerable investment of its builders to the competency of a determined central ruling authority and, most notably, to the audacity and vision of that authority.” David was audacious! Bold! And what faith that man had even as a teenager. You know those stories.

The Stepped Stone Structure, which was built to support the palace, was as high as a 12-story building. If you have something like that, with the palace on top, the stones really do speak! They have a lot to say. And Dr. Mazar believed that only 20 percent of David’s palace had been excavated.

Here was a royal warrior king who fought battles time and time again to make everything ready so it could be peaceful for his son Solomon. One of the walls was 3 meters (10 feet) wide; another one was 6 meters (20 feet) wide. This is real engineering, and it occurred in the 10th century B.C.E. It was a palace fit for a royal warrior king! And how he led Israel, and is going to lead it in the future! What a future that will be. These palace stones are speaking, and it’s all about royalty.

Dr. Mazar said, “There may be times where it will take 10 years for people to readjust to support or even accept the idea. But I’m not going to wait for them.” I like that. She was a lady in a big hurry. She just kept moving ahead, in spite of the critics, and there were plenty of those. But she had that spirit of David in many ways. And she was not waiting for anybody. She knew she had to move fast to get this work done. And she really helped to bring David alive.

Our exhibit in Oklahoma features Dr. Mazar and her discoveries that relate to King David. If you get the facts on this topic, you are going to be moved. And it is something to behold. It’s something to be excited about, and something to be inspired about. And it’s breathtaking when you realize what God is talking about here in His biblical “big dig”—His wonderful work that He is going to give to all of this world.

We are thankful for the opportunity to host the “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” exhibit. This is, in many ways, a unique project, but it’s something that is for everybody. God’s biblical archaeology is about the coming of the Messiah—so YOU’RE NOT TALKING ABOUT JUST JERUSALEM OR ISRAEL, YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT THE WHOLE WORLD! That is coming! And it’s something we need to have that will overflow everything in the picture we have in our minds. And we need to etch that vision into our minds. And I’ll tell you, it will motivate you as nothing else ever has. ■

*This article was taken from Gerald Flurry’s February 25 address at the opening ceremony of the “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” exhibit.*



Come Meet  
David  
Solo

Monumental  
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Dating a Capital

Capital First  
David's Palace





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# H

E WAS ISRAEL'S GREATEST king. He unified a divided nation and expanded Israel's borders. He established Jerusalem as

Israel's monumental capital. He was the beginning of an unending dynasty.

King David left behind a remarkable and illustrious legacy. He established an impressive kingdom and then left his son Solomon an inheritance of peace and prosperity. The Bible describes the united kingdom of Israel as unmatched in wealth, power and influence.

But does archaeological, scientific and historical proof of the kingdom of David and Solomon exist? Our world premiere exhibit provides a thorough and detailed answer!

Showcasing over 40 artifacts from 10th-century B.C.E. biblical Israel, a tour of our exhibit—whether in person or virtual—will equip you with a detailed understanding of the kingdom of Israel at the time of David and Solomon.

It marks the world premiere of the Ophel Pithos Inscription and a selection of other artifacts discovered by Dr. Eilat Mazar on the Ophel and in the City of David. The exhibit also features elements of monumental Jerusalem, including a Phoenician-style capital discovered in Jerusalem.

Unearthed at archaeological sites across Israel, including Jerusalem, Timna, Lachish and Khirbet Qeiyafa, this unique collection of iron, pottery, stone and textiles is presented within a sensational exhibit featuring life-size monumental wall reconstructions, virtual-reality tours, video presentations and several original illustrations and artwork selections.

This exhibit is totally unique. It is the first time such a diverse collection of 10th-century archaeological finds have been collected in one place and presented in their broader scientific, historic and biblical context to reveal the monumental nature of the united monarchy during the reigns of kings David and Solomon.

“Up until 10 years ago, this exhibit would be impossible,” said exhibit assistant curator Brent Nagtegaal. “Most of the discoveries that are featured within the exhibit were unearthed within the last 10 to 15 years. This is new information that’s coming to the public that couldn’t have been done before.”

This free exhibit is presented and funded by the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology in association with the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation, the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israel Museum of Jerusalem and the Israel Antiquities Authority.

It is located in Edmond, Oklahoma, in the lobby of Armstrong Auditorium. The exhibit is open to the public through Jan. 17, 2025. Admission is free. You can also tour the exhibit online. To take the virtual tour and immerse yourself into our exhibit, visit [exhibit-tour.armstronginstitute.org](http://exhibit-tour.armstronginstitute.org). ■

## OPHEL PITHOS INSCRIPTION, 10TH CENTURY B.C.E.

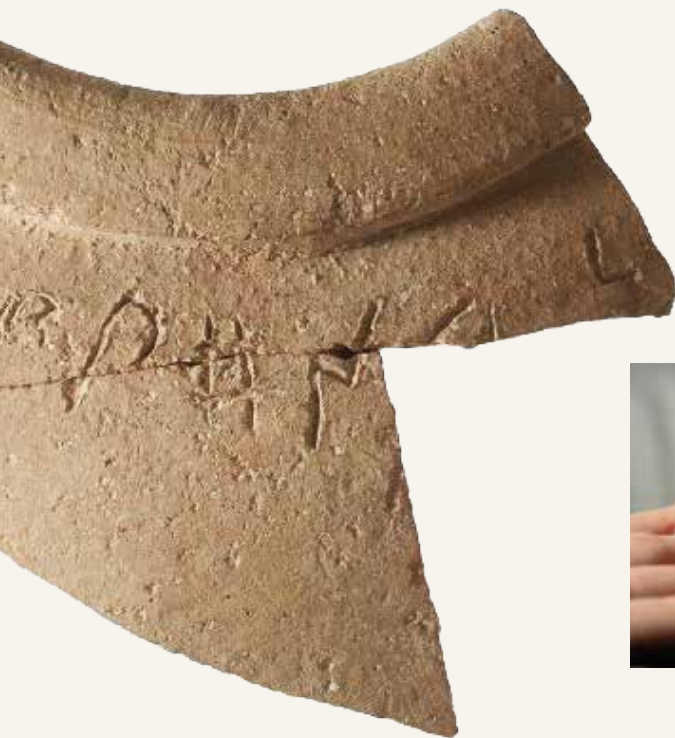
This is the oldest alphabetical inscription ever discovered in Jerusalem. It was unearthed in the 2012 season of the Ophel excavation. Epigrapher Dr. Daniel Vainstub believes that the text is Ancient South Arabian—from the land of biblical Sheba. The inscription on the jar reads, “shy l’dn 5,” meaning “five measures of *ladanum*” (*Cistus ladaniferus*), which scholars believe to be biblical “*šāhēlet*,” an essential ingredient in the incense burned in the first and second temples (Exodus 30:34).

The discovery of the Ophel Inscription marks a turning point in many fields. Not only is this the first time an Ancient South Arabian inscription dated to the 10th century B.C.E. has been found in such a northern location, but it is also a locally engraved inscription “attesting to the presence of a Sabaean functionary” that “was active in Jerusalem at the time of King Solomon,” Dr. Vainstub wrote.

This inscription supports the biblical account of the reign of Solomon. When the Queen of Sheba visited Jerusalem, the Bible says she gifted Solomon with spices from her native land. “[T]here came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon” (1 Kings 10:10). For more information on the Ophel Pithos Inscription, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/901](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/901).







### THE SHRINE MODEL, 10TH CENTURY B.C.E.

This model was found at Khirbet Qeiyafa and dates to the 10th century B.C.E. It was carved from a single block of soft limestone. It still features traces of red paint on the outside. Its design features have been compared to biblical descriptions of Solomon's 10th-century temple and palace in Jerusalem. Scholars debate the exact function of the shrine model, but it clearly relates to religious worship in Judah prior to the construction of the temple.

The stone model has three recessed doorposts. 1 Kings 7:4-5 describe Solomon using this style of architecture for his palatial building near the temple (and it is likely he used the same technique for the first temple itself).

The model has seven protruding "squares" beneath the roof. Each square is divided by two lines, into three small rectangles. It is clear that these are meant to represent the ends of wooden crossbeams supporting the roof. This depiction is actually a comparatively "advanced" design feature called a "triglyph," appearing in classical Greek buildings some 400 years later. The fact that the design was already known at such an ancient time—the 10th century B.C.E.—indicates that the early Israelite kingdom was far more advanced and influential in construction and design than first believed. For more information, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/1007](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/1007).



### PHOENICIAN-STYLE GOLD BASKET PENDANT, 10TH CENTURY B.C.E.

This stunning piece of jewelry was discovered in the 2012 Ophel excavation in Jerusalem, led by the late Dr. Eilat Mazar. It is made from electrum (an alloy of gold and silver). Discovered while wet-sifting an ancient collapse of earth, it dates by archaeological context to the 10th century B.C.E. This marks the first time a golden object dated to the 10th century B.C.E. has been found in Jerusalem. This is the first time the artifact has been shown to the public.


This unique item was likely attached to an earring by golden wire. Similar examples have been found throughout the Mediterranean at sites associated exclusively with Phoenician colonization and settlement. According to Iron Age jewelry expert Dr. Amir Golani, this jewelry type may be "firmly linked to the Phoenicians," which makes its discovery in Jerusalem's royal quarter more compelling. According to the Bible, Phoenician King Hiram sent many of his best stone masons and artificers to work on Solomon's temple and palace (1 Kings 5:31-32). Thus, this basket pendant is evidence of a Phoenician presence in Jerusalem around the time of King Solomon. For more information, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/995](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/995).

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Artists depiction of Jerusalem  
at the time of David

# WAS DAVID AND SOLOMON'S JERUSALEM A 'GODFORSAKEN' PLACE?

What does archaeology tell us?

BY BRAD MACDONALD AND CHRISTOPHER EAMES

**I**N A 2021 INTERVIEW SERIES HOSTED BY THE W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, one of Israel's most prominent archaeologists made some bold remarks about the Bible and its role in archaeology in Israel.

He explained that David and Solomon were simple, hill-country chieftains, and not the towering monarchs recorded in the Bible. He theorized that the story of David and Goliath was invented during the time of King Josiah (late seventh century B.C.E.) and was crafted to reflect his upcoming clash with Egypt's Pharaoh Necho (Josiah was King David, Egypt was Goliath). He also said King Solomon's glorious reign was probably modeled by late biblical writers after an Assyrian king, maybe Sennacherib.

He also shared some bold and controversial views about biblical Jerusalem. He claimed that Judah and Jerusalem only turned from a "godforsaken" place to an important kingdom in the *late eighth century* B.C.E., when they were incorporated into the Assyrian economy. And he claimed that Judah only became a truly literate state—allowing for the composition of the Bible—when educated Israelites from the north fled into Judah from their own Assyrian destruction during the same century.

Many Jews, Christians, even Muslims would disagree with the views of Prof. Israel Finkelstein. And some

might even get upset by these claims. But the more important question is, *what does the evidence say?*

In the first interview of the series, Professor Finkelstein emphasized how important it is to "speak facts and data" when talking about ancient Israel and Jerusalem. And he is absolutely right. But here's the context of that statement: "First and foremost, ... *the Bible does not mean to speak history*. The Bible is all about theology, about ideology ... and we scholars, researchers, need to speak facts and data" (emphasis added throughout).

Finkelstein clearly rejects the Bible as a historical source. But on what grounds? Where are the facts and data, the hard evidence—the science—proving that the Bible does not "speak history"?

Let's examine Finkelstein's claims specifically about biblical Jerusalem (Episode 15 of the series). Was Jerusalem a "godforsaken" place until the late eighth century B.C.E.? Is understanding Jerusalem of the united monarchy "a lost case," as his interviewer concluded following Finkelstein's comments? Is it correct for his interviewer to assert that "[e]xtensive archaeology has revealed *nothing*" about it?

## Where Was Original Jerusalem?

The interview began with a discussion about the original location of Jerusalem. The majority opinion

of scholars, archaeologists and historians is that early Jerusalem was situated in the area known today as the City of David, the ridge located south of the Temple Mount. According to the biblical text, David conquered this original city site ruled by the Canaanite Jebusites and made it his capital—and Solomon later expanded the city northward to include the temple construction.

According to Finkelstein, this understanding is flawed and there is “no way to clarify” where the ancient City of David really was. “We don’t really know what [these names] mean. We don’t really know what the Bible means when the Bible speaks about the City of David. There’s no place we can really pinpoint on the ridge to the south of the Temple Mount.”

Finkelstein believes the original city of Jerusalem was situated at the top of the Temple Mount hill, and that the city expanded *southward* down the ridge. He gave several reasons for his theory. First, he said, the City of David does not look like a typical “tel” mound. Second, he pointed out the lack of Bronze Age remains in the area, particularly the southern part of the City of David. And third, he explained that city mounds are usually situated at the top of the highest ground. “The City of David ridge,” he explained, “is completely dominated on three sides by higher grounds,” and this would have given enemies a tactical advantage.

Because of these reasons, Finkelstein believes that the original city of Jerusalem must have constituted a large tel mound located within the area today known as the Temple Mount. It’s an interesting theory. But how much of it is “facts and data”?

Consider the claim that we cannot know what the Bible means when it speaks about the City of David. The Bible is actually quite specific in describing the location of the original Canaanite city, Jebus. First, it says explicitly that the original Jebusite fortress in Jerusalem, captured by David, was renamed the City of David. 2 Samuel 5:7 tells us “the *same* is the city of David.” Furthermore, this passage states that this fortress (*metzudah* in Hebrew) was located in a *lower* ridge location—“down” from the highest geographical features (verse 17).

The Bible also indicates that the site was atypically small and extremely well defended geographically. In verses 6-8, the Canaanites boast that the city’s defense is so strong, even “the blind and the lame” could defend it. Finally, the Bible also reveals that the upper site of the future temple was part of an agricultural area outside and higher in elevation than the original city (1 Chronicles 21:18-19; 22:1).

Professor Finkelstein suggested that a settlement on the lower ridge would have been a strategic liability, but this view is not borne out historically. Jerusalem has been conquered numerous times. While the

northern Temple Mount area is technically the highest point, this area is also a more-gradually sloped, broader area. Historically, this is the point where the city has typically been breached. When the Romans invaded in 70 C.E., they attacked the city from north of the Temple Mount. The Babylonians attacked the same point when they conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. This was the point where Assyria’s King Sennacherib threatened Judah with his armies in the late eighth century B.C.E. (although an attack did not take place). This was also the location where part of the city wall was torn down by the attacking kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 14:13).

The ridge and small summit on which the City of David sits is actually an extremely difficult area to penetrate. The bedrock on the east and west sides of the ridge falls away sharply, creating narrow valleys that become a kill-zone for large forces.

Additionally, recent excavations of the Givati Parking Lot have revealed a massive man-made trench in the bedrock between the City of David and the Ophel mound. This moat undoubtedly served as a defensive feature protecting the city from invasion from the north. (For more information, read “The Moat of Ancient Jerusalem,” page 12.)

The fact that the City of David doesn’t fit the mold of a large “tel” mound, and that it has a comparatively lower elevation, may not accord with Finkelstein’s conceptualization of early Jerusalem—but *it does fit with the historical accounts*.

Now what about the purported lack of Bronze Age remains?

## Where Is Bronze Age Jerusalem?

Archaeology in Israel and the ancient Near East is divided into several periods. The Bronze Age spans the third and second millenniums B.C.E. (put simply, Early Bronze, circa 3000–2000; Middle Bronze, 2000–1500; Late Bronze, 1500–1200 B.C.E.). Where are the remains of Jerusalem from the middle of the second millennium B.C.E.?

It is clear from Egyptian inscriptions, as Finkelstein highlighted, that Jerusalem *was* occupied in the Bronze Age—both the Middle and Late. Where, then, are these remains on the City of David ridge? After all, as Finkelstein noted, in areas of the southern ridge there is bedrock under Iron Age remains, and we have “only a [Bronze Age] sherd here or a sherd there ... we don’t have at all evidence, or almost none, for architecture, houses, any construction activity.” Due to the lack of Bronze Age remains in the City of David, Finkelstein concludes that Bronze Age Jerusalem “must have been located on the Temple Mount” (although, as he admits, this theory cannot be put to the test by excavation due to the religious and political situation).

Before getting into what *has* been found, consider what *has not* been found.

While the City of David isn't as politically or religiously sensitive as the Temple Mount, it is still incredibly sensitive. Much of the area is situated in the densely populated Arab neighborhood of Silwan. This makes it difficult to conduct large-scale excavations that would expose large swathes of territory. Instead, archaeologists have to excavate smaller areas, building their picture slowly over time, in fits and spurts.

Next, recall that Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt several times over the centuries. According to Eric Cline's book *Jerusalem Besieged*, the city has been "besieged 23 times, attacked an additional 52 times, and captured and recaptured 44 times." This, too, explains the lack of Bronze Age evidence: Much of it was destroyed in these attacks.

Finally, despite the relatively small area that has been excavated, and all of the destructions that have occurred, there *is* archaeological evidence for Bronze Age occupation in the City of David.

Archaeological excavations around the Gihon Spring—situated in the lower, northeastern corner of the City of David—have revealed part of a truly massive fortification, one that dates to the Middle Bronze Age (circa 2000–1500 B.C.E.). This fortification wrapped around and protected the vital Gihon Spring. Its walls are massive, up to 7 meters wide at their foundations—the widest walls of any Bronze Age site in *all* Israel.

The Gihon Spring, Jerusalem's only water source, is located on the *lower ridge* of the City of David, partway down into the eastern Kidron Valley. The location of this spring, and the tunnels that link it to the City of David (*not* the Temple Mount), are some of the greatest proofs of the location of the original site of Jerusalem—built deliberately *around* and protecting the vital spring.

Professor Finkelstein recognizes this massive Middle Bronze Age fortification in the lower City of David. However, he suggests that this giant structure was simply a standalone building, an outlying tower from the Temple Mount city-hub, built to protect the distant spring. (He also postulates that the underground network of ancient tunnels beneath the City of David leading to the Gihon Spring simply gave late writers the idea to craft a story about David conquering Jerusalem using them.)

Consider the facts: What is the most rational explanation? Why do these Bronze Age tunnels connected to the Gihon Spring lead into the City of David and not north, into the Temple Mount? This suggests the City of David was the central habitation at this time, *not the Temple Mount*.

Consider too: Is it difficult to believe that Middle Bronze Age structures such as these continued to be

used in the Late Bronze Age? And what about other Canaanite-era walls discovered on the lower eastern slopes of the City of David, better sheltered from exposure and destruction?

The man who interviewed Professor Finkelstein questioned his theory of a Bronze Age Jerusalem centered on the Temple Mount. The interviewer identified certain difficulties with the theory, such as the exposed bedrock at the center of the Temple Mount site. In response, Finkelstein noted that erosion down to bedrock at an elevated point of the site is not unusual (again, structures are usually better-preserved in lower, more sheltered areas of a site). He also pointed out that we shouldn't expect to find much on the Temple Mount anyway, given Herod's clearing and rebuilding of the site for his temple.

How ironic. These are the *same explanations* for a lack of Bronze Age remains in much of the City of David—the exposed, eroded bedrock along the upper, southern part of the ridge, as well as repeat events of destruction and rebuilding. Here's the key difference though: The only remnants we have of Bronze Age Jerusalem are in the *City of David*, not on the Temple Mount. Because something can be said to the question of Bronze Age remains on the Temple Mount: Sifting and various analyses have been done on the many tons of earth illegally bulldozed out of the Temple Mount foundations by the Islamic Waqf, along with other underground surveys of the Temple Mount. As affirmed by Dr. Hillel Geva and Dr. Alon De Groot, there is no evidence of tel stratification, and only 1 percent of the material remains discovered date prior to the Iron Age—rather damning evidence against this site as the location of a strong Bronze Age city tel.

## The United Monarchy

Finkelstein's strongest broadsides were aimed at David and Solomon. As his interviewer concluded, "Jerusalem seems to be a lost case. Extensive archaeology has revealed nothing" about the united monarchy. In the interviews, Finkelstein discussed two main archaeological features related to this period: the Stepped Stone Structure and the Large Stone Structure (better known informally as "King David's palace").

Both structures were excavated from 2005 to 2008 by the late Dr. Eilat Mazar, who famously identified the monumental remains as a singular, palatial structure dating to the 10th century B.C.E. (fitting with the biblical account of David's palace-building in 2 Samuel 5).

The Stepped Stone Structure served as a massive supporting revetment against the precarious and narrow northern slope of the City of David ridge, allowing support for a large public building above

and the continuation of a city wall. Dr. Mazar showed that the Large Stone Structure (David's palace) was the building for which the Stepped Stone Structure was built (her excavation revealed that the two actually interlocked, indicating they were part of the same supreme structure).

Professor Finkelstein, of course, disagrees. He claims the Stepped Stone Structure was built at a time "when the city starts expanding south from the Temple Mount," and "in my opinion, we are dealing with support of the slope in different periods." But what about the pottery retrieved from between the courses of stones proving the building was built in the late 11th or early 10th centuries? Finkelstein says this pottery dates to the *ninth* century B.C.E., not the 10th century. "This structure should be dated to the ninth century, or even to the beginning of the eighth century B.C.E.," he claims.

Indeed, there is some debate among scholars as to the dating of the Stepped Stone Structure. However, Finkelstein's proposition that it dates as late as the eighth century is rejected by most Jerusalem archaeologists.

As for the Large Stone Structure, Finkelstein explains: "I don't think that we are dealing there with a single building. There are several walls, remains there; they do not all come from the same moment, from the same period. And I think that the earliest construction there should be put also in the ninth century B.C.E. Perhaps together with the revetment on the slope, perhaps they were connected ... but we are *not* dealing with monuments from the 10th century. So there is no escape, in my opinion, from stating, from saying, from asserting, that the city of the time of David and Solomon was located on the Temple Mount."

In the first interview of the series, Finkelstein admitted that he is not a pottery specialist. "Sometimes people ask me about my profession ... I don't see myself, you know, as a specialist of the rim of the cooking pot or the storage jar, or the base, or whatever," he says. Dr. Mazar, on the other hand, did *specialize* in pottery analysis, notably Iron Age pottery, and *particularly* that of the early Iron IIa—the 10th century B.C.E.

But Dr. Mazar did not rely solely on pottery to date the Large Stone Structure to the 10th century. She also used carbon dating—a method of dating that is wholeheartedly endorsed by Finkelstein. Dr. Mazar's radiocarbon samples backed up her pottery dating—dating the building to sometime between the late 11th and early 10th centuries B.C.E.

And what about his theory that the walls of the Large Stone Structure do not relate to a single building? This

is peculiar, given that there are very few walls making up the palatial structure. There are only *two* primary, gigantic walls forming a right angle that make up the main northern outline of this building. Are these two massive walls—exposed up to 30 meters long, and 6 meters wide, forming a palatial enclosure—meant to be from separate buildings?

There is also the obvious question: If the massive Large Stone Structure isn't a palace, then what is it? "In my opinion ... I understand this structure as some sort of a fort protecting the water that was built in the ninth century when the city expanded," Finkelstein stated. But what about the Spring Tower? If the Spring Tower alone was sufficient to guard the Gihon Spring far *outside* of Finkelstein's original Jerusalem walls, why would an *expanded* Jerusalem border southward around the spring require *another* enormous secondary tower to defend it?

Consider too: What about the *many* 10th-century remains discovered by Dr. Mazar on the Ophel, which Mazar identified with the biblical account of King Solomon's *northward* expansion of the city toward the Temple Mount? What about the 70-meter-long, up to 6-meter-tall "Straight Wall"? What about the Solomonic gatehouse, dated to the 10th century, its measurements paralleling similar gatehouses around Israel to the nearest *centimeter* in some cases (indicating a singular, governing authority over the land at the time)? What about the directly associated Large Tower, which lies buried under the Ophel Road, with only its outline revealed—a tower which, if uncovered, would be the *largest* single Iron Age structure in all Israel? Are these 10th-century remains evidence of a so-called "godforsaken" city and nation at this time?

With a casual remark or two, Mr. Finkelstein simply dates all these to the ninth century. He believes that "Jerusalem [of the united monarchy] seems to be a lost case—[that] *extensive archaeology has revealed nothing*." The truth is, the science—actual pottery, carbon dating and direct corroboration of the literary text—disproves Professor Finkelstein's claims.

## Archaeology and the Bible

One of the most central topics discussed in this interview series was the ongoing debate about the Bible and archaeology, and the role of the Bible in archaeology in Israel. Finkelstein explained some of the history of this debate.

Ever since archaeology emerged as a field of study in the 19th century, he explained, there have been two camps, or schools of thought. "One camp, the camp of the more conservative approach, [the] more conservative scholars ... basically walk in line of the biblical

texts.” Advocates of this approach accept the Bible as a historical source and consider it a valuable resource in archaeology.

The other camp is critical of the Bible and the value it provides to archaeology. Adherents of this view are often referred to as biblical minimalists. The roots of this view, as Finkelstein said, extend all the way back into the 17th and 18th centuries, the age of German rationalism, when scientists became critical of the Bible.

For almost two centuries now, the pendulum has swung between these two camps. Since the 1980s, the advantage lay with the biblical minimalists, figures like Israel Finkelstein. Today, however, Finkelstein hints that the pendulum is moving in the other direction. “In my opinion, now we are in a new phase of attempts to show that archaeology can strike back at the critical approach,” he said.

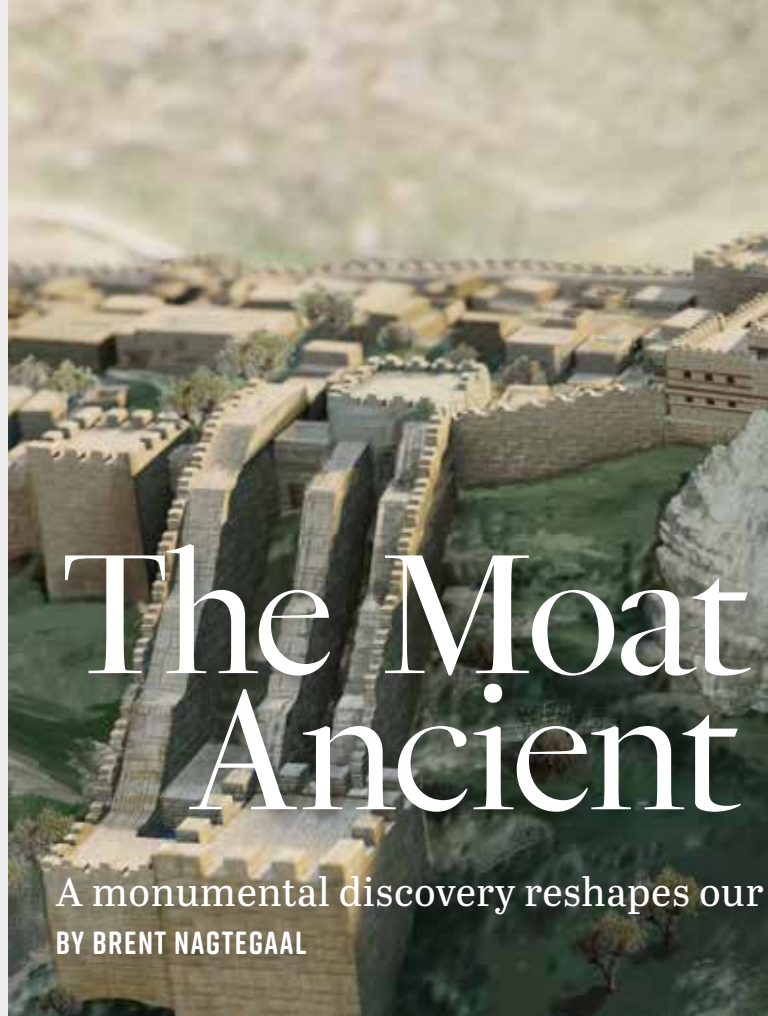
Setting aside his view that these are mere “attempts,” his remark does recognize a certain scientific reality. Over the past two or three decades, archaeological excavations across Israel have furnished a bounty of evidence—including pottery inscriptions, bullae, ancient walls and complexes, and other tangible artifacts—that clearly support the biblical text.

Check it out for yourself. Take a look at the work of Dr. Scott Stripling in Shiloh, or the work of Tel Aviv University’s Dr. Erez Ben-Yosef at Timna, or Prof. Yosef Garfinkel in Khirbet Qeiyafa. Our website has shone the spotlight on the lifelong efforts of Dr. Eilat Mazar in the City of David and the Ophel in Jerusalem. All of these respected archaeologists, and many others too, have uncovered archaeological evidence across Israel that establishes the credibility of the Bible as a book of *history*.

To his credit, Finkelstein appears to accept that archaeology, in his words, is striking back at the critical approach. Dr. Mazar always said that we must “let the stones speak”—and they are!

The stones tell us that ancient Jerusalem, *just as the Bible reveals*, was indeed situated on the City of David ridge, right beside the Gihon Spring. The stones tell us that Jerusalem during the 10th-century united monarchy, *just as the Bible relates*, was a large and impressive civilization. The stones tell us, *just as the Bible reveals*, that Jerusalem in the 10th century was anything but “godforsaken.”

Finally, and most importantly, the stones tell us that the Bible is both a credible and indispensable resource in archaeology in Israel. ■



# The Moat Ancient

A monumental discovery reshapes our  
BY BRENT NAGTEGAAL

**O**F ALL THE ANCIENT CITIES IN ISRAEL, JERUSALEM is the most topographically unique. Most ancient cities—like Megiddo, Hazor, Lachish and Gath—are built on a single high hill. This makes the entire tel more easily defensible. Jerusalem, however, is built on a long, narrow ridge that rises in elevation from the south to the north.

The Gihon Spring, Jerusalem’s only perennial water source, is situated deep in the valley on the southeastern part of the ridge. Both archaeology and the biblical text reveal that early Jerusalem (from the Bronze Age into Iron I) was situated beside this spring, which means the city was built on the lower southern portion of the ridge.

The situation of the early city has long created a quandary for archaeologists attempting to reconstruct the history of Jerusalem. Strategically, the city would have been vulnerable to attack from the north, where the elevation was higher. This even led a few scholars to posit that the ancient core of Jerusalem wasn’t centered around the spring but on one of the higher peaks on the northern part of the ridge. For those who believed that the city was situated farther south, as the archaeology and biblical account suggest, the question remained: Where exactly was the northern border of the original city?



# of Jerusalem

understanding of ancient Jerusalem.

Now, thanks to one monumental discovery, the calculus on Jerusalem's ancient topography has changed. This discovery not only answers the question about the northern limits of the ancient city, but also settles the question about the original location of Jerusalem.

## **A Surprising New Discovery**

The Givati Parking Lot excavation is currently the longest-running excavation in Israel (the massive dig began in 2007). When I first visited the site in 2006, it was still a parking lot. Today it's an impressively deep excavation site, with preserved remains from the Iron Age all the way to the Ottoman period. The site is located on the northwestern slope of the Eastern Hill, the area of Jerusalem's most ancient settlement.

In the last few years, the excavation team from Tel Aviv University and the Israel Antiquities Authority have unearthed a man-made gorge in the bedrock. At 35 meters (115 feet) wide and 6 to 9 meters (20 to 30 feet) high, the cut section is massive. (A full description of the moat was published in the *Tel Aviv University Journal* in an article titled "An Early Iron Age Moat in Jerusalem Between the Ophel and the Southeastern Ridge/City of David.")

Archaeologists have excavated the western slope of the ridge and have exposed a large cross section of the

moat. While a road and residences prevent further excavation east, previous small-scale excavations conducted near the center of the ridge by Kathleen Kenyon in the 1960s and Rina Avner in 2003 revealed lower-than-expected bedrock heights. The Givati team, by combining their findings with those of Kenyon and Avner, concluded that the moat almost certainly continues across the entire width of the ridge. The excavators also believe the moat was man-made, and not a natural feature.

This is a major discovery: It means that the original City of David was at one time *separated* from the Ophel and Mount Moriah by a gigantic trench.

When was the moat built?

We don't know exactly, and it is almost impossible to determine (at least for now). We can, however, identify the *latest* possible time that the moat was built.

The southern bedrock wall of the moat is extremely steep (it's the deepest part of the entire feature). The gradient of the wall is so steep archaeologists believe it had to be carved (formations like this are not known to occur naturally in the Meleke rock formations in Jerusalem).

The northern slope of the moat isn't nearly as steep. It also descends in two steps. As part of the step-down, excavators uncovered curious bedrock grooves running north-south in the same direction as the moat.

Archaeologists excavated inside three grooves and observed a thin whitish surface made of crushed limestone. Under this surface they found a stratified fill with pottery types indicative of the early Iron IIA period (10th century B.C.E.) through to perhaps the Iron IIA-B transition, or the late ninth century. After studying this and other stratigraphic data, the excavators concluded: “It may be safely determined that the cutting of the ditch occurred no later than the late Iron IIA.” According to them, this would be the late ninth century—about 100 years after the death of King Solomon.

Note, this is the *latest* possible date of construction. It is probable, as the Givati team believes, that the moat was constructed long before the late ninth century B.C.E.

When was the moat filled and lost to history?

This is an easier question to answer, thanks to the mass of material found dating to the late Hellenistic Period (early second century B.C.E.) that continues all the way to the bottom of the moat. On the west side, there is also a large north-south wall built on the bottom of the moat. Previous excavators of the site dated this wall to the early second century B.C.E., around the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. However, the current excavators believe that the wall was in use during the Persian Period and must have been built earlier.

What is the purpose of this large trench that appears to have separated southern and northern Jerusalem for over 600 years?

Archaeologists can only offer educated guesses. Initially, when the city was confined to the southern part of the ridge, the moat acted as an essential defensive line. As the land lay naturally, there was nothing to stop an enemy army attacking the city from an elevated position to the north. But the bold addition of a 35-meter-wide moat with steep walls interrupted the gradual slope, giving the northern part of the city a much stronger defense.

When the city of Jerusalem expanded north, the authors suggest, the moat provided a buffer between the city’s elite occupying the Ophel area and the lowly city dwellers to the south. The division of a city along socioeconomic lines has a parallel in other cities, such as Hazor. It was once argued that this style of division was evidence of the Israelite King Omri’s handiwork. However, the authors discount the moat as an Omride feature because it likely predates his rule.

With commendable humility, the authors don’t pretend to have all the answers. They admit, for example, that we don’t know how the moat was bridged. Was there a bridge made of wood? Were there stairs going down and up? One of the authors, Dr. Yiftah Shalev, put it best in an interview with *Haaretz*: “The elephant is in the room. I cannot explain how everything worked, but I cannot ignore this structure, which clearly existed.”

## Monumental Change in Jerusalem

Given the difficulty in precisely dating the construction of the trench, the Givati team prefers not to associate the moat with a historical or biblical personality. They do, however, associate the moat with the monumental change that occurred in Jerusalem in the early Iron IIA, the period generally associated with kings David and Solomon. So while the archaeologists refrain from explicitly mentioning the united monarchy, the elephant in the room is that the moat *could* be the handiwork of David or Solomon.

How is the moat connected to the monumental change in architecture that occurred in Iron IIA?

It needs to be considered alongside the archaeological discoveries from this same period in the areas directly northeast and southeast of the ditch, both of which were excavated by the late Dr. Eilat Mazar of Hebrew University.

First, as the Givati report notes, there’s the “monumental complex” discovered on the Ophel over the past 15 years, which includes what Dr. Mazar believed to be a 10th-century city wall. Although they take the view that some of the large buildings on the Ophel can possibly be dated a little later than Iron IIA, they note the early Iron IIA dating of the “massive constructional fill” that supported a large Ophel structure.

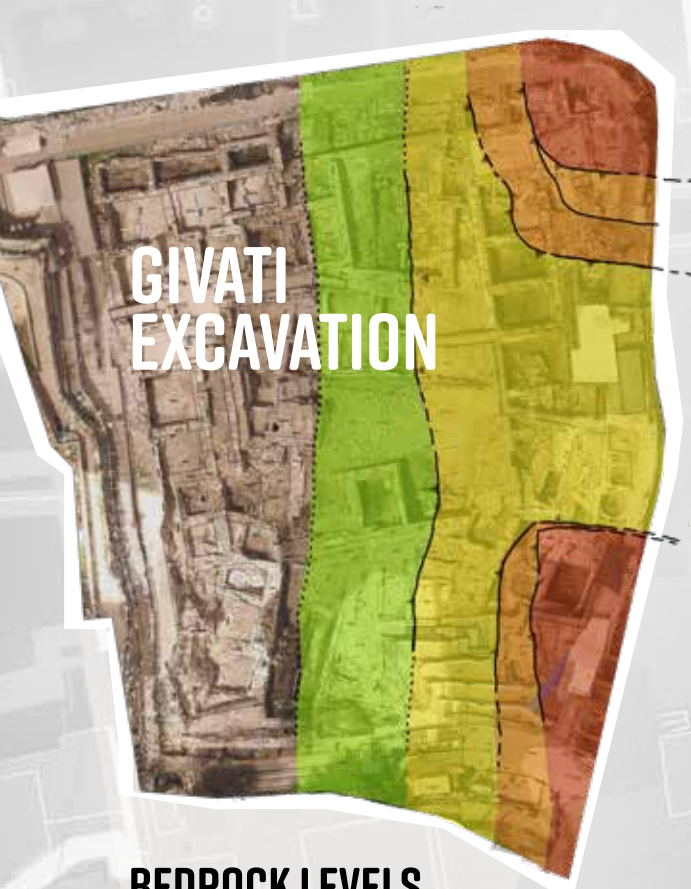
Second, there are the Iron IIA remains discovered immediately southeast of the trench, in the northernmost part of the City of David. The most important feature in this area is the Stepped Stone Structure, situated about 15 meters (50 feet) south of the proposed eastern side of the moat. Measuring over 20 meters (66 feet) tall, the Stepped Stone Structure is by far the largest man-made feature from the Iron Age ever discovered in Israel.

We know too, thanks to the work of Eilat Mazar, that the Stepped Stone Structure functioned as a retaining wall for a monumental building on top of the ridge. That upper building, technically known as the Large Stone Structure but designated by Dr. Mazar as King David’s palace, dated to the time period of King David’s building program in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5).

While the Givati team avoided the debate over the Large Stone Structure, it clearly accepted Dr. Mazar’s dating of the structure: “We share the commonly accepted view that it was constructed during the very late Iron I or the early Iron IIA and continued to function in its original form into the late Iron IIA or early Iron IIB ... [T]he remains ... provide evidence for the presence of a public building south of the barrier through the Iron IIA.” In short, it was constructed around the time of King David.

The construction of the monumental moat needs to be considered alongside the construction of these

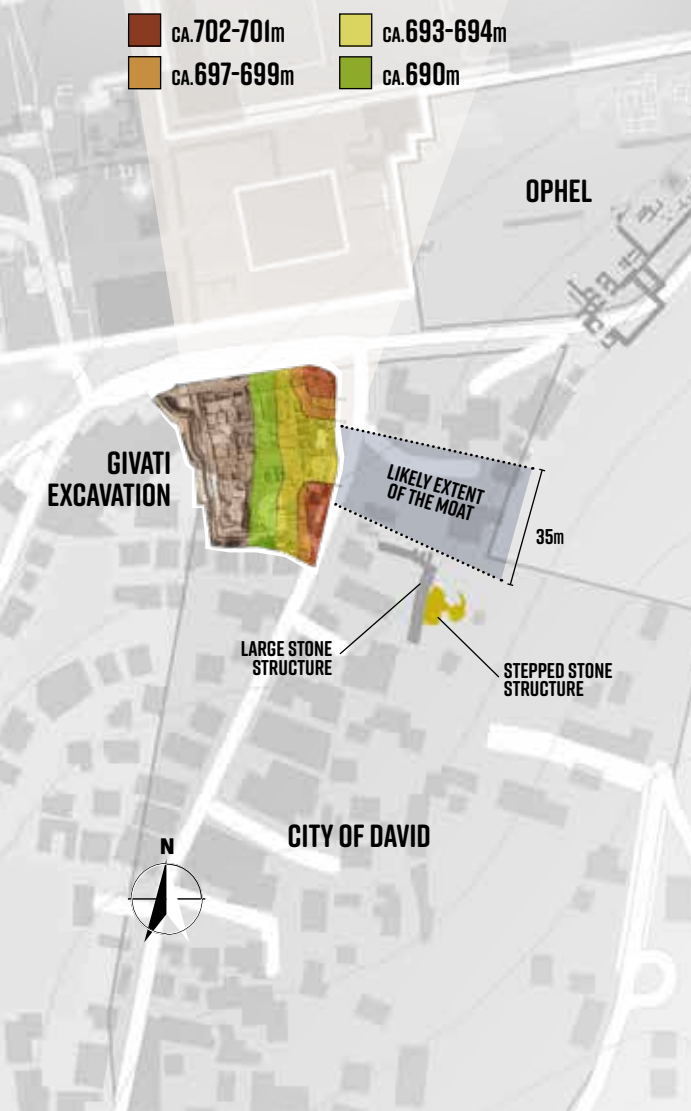




# GIVATI EXCAVATION

## BEDROCK LEVELS

- CA.702-701m
- CA.693-694m
- CA.697-699m
- CA.690m



GIVATI EXCAVATION DIRECTORS PROF. YUVAL GADOT AND DR. YITFAH SHALEV STAND INSIDE THE MOAT (LOOKING NORTH EAST)



GIVATI EXCAVATION IN JERUSALEM (LOOKING SOUTH)

# EARLY IRON AGE

CITY OF DAVID

LARGE STONE  
STRUCTURE  
(PALACE OF DAVID)

STEPPED STONE STRUCTURE  
(POSSIBLE “MILLO”)

KIDRON VALLEY

two monumental structures, the Stepped Stone Structure and Large Stone Structure. Were these three epic features built at the same time and by the same ambitious builder? Or were they built over the course of the expansion of the city over two or three generations? It's difficult to know for certain, at least for now. Nevertheless, as the Givati report states, “The Iron IIA was a time of major building activities, which went hand in hand with massive landscaping projects.”

Then, in a statement reminiscent of the late Dr. Mazar, they write: “All of these projects may not

have taken place simultaneously, but they are part of the same royal mindset that dramatically changed the urban landscape of Jerusalem and can be placed, generally speaking, in the formative movements of Iron Age Jerusalem—i.e. the end of the Iron I until the beginning of the Iron IIB.”

This is a noteworthy and admirable admission from the team at Tel Aviv University and the Israel Antiquities Authority, archaeologists who do not typically support the notion of an early monarchy construction in Jerusalem. Granted, if we paired their archaeological

# II JERUSALEM



dating with the biblical kings, the window of time discussed by the archaeologists includes a handful of monarchs after David and Solomon. Nevertheless, kudos to the team for boldly connecting their moat discovery with the other monumental discoveries of Iron IIA Jerusalem.

## Possible Historical Reconstructions

With no construction date and only a portion of the moat revealed, the Givati team refrained from integrating the scarp into a broader chrono-historical

reconstruction. And they didn't make any connections to the biblical text. Does the Bible say anything about a moat in Jerusalem? And can we, using the biblical text and archaeology, develop a plausible model?

Perhaps. First, the discovery of the moat fits extremely well with the progression of Jerusalem's expansion from south to north as discussed in the Bible during the same time period.

The Bible—paired with geography, history and archaeology—describes the expansion of the city from the end of Iron I through to the end of Iron IIA.

CONTINUED ON  
PAGE 30

# TOP 10 BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY DISCOVERIES

Our take on the top discoveries in 2023

**A**NOTHER YEAR IN BIBLICAL archaeology is behind us—and a big year it was, particularly in discoveries and research relating to kings David and Solomon.

What follows is our top 10 list of biblical archaeology discoveries for 2023. Some of these are in the form of individual small finds, some are broader site finds, and some are the product of general research and publication.



See our video on the top 10 finds.  
[ARMSTRONGINSTITUTE.ORG/1034](https://armstronginstitute.org/1034)



**10** 'OLDEST KNOWN GATE'  
IN THE HOLY LAND

In August, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced the discovery at Tel Erani of the earliest known gate found in Israel, dated by archaeologists to the Early Bronze Age IB (circa 5,500 years ago). Tel Erani is a prominent city mound located in the Judean lowlands, northeast of the Gaza Strip.

The gate is preserved to a height of around 1.5 meters and consists of a large monolithic

## 9 MONUMENTAL MIDDLE BRONZE SHIMRON

Archaeologists working at the northern site of Tel Shimron (between the Sea of Galilee and Haifa) discovered a massive, 3,800-year-old monumental structure. Shimron is a second-millennium B.C.E. Canaanite city mentioned twice in the book of Joshua (Joshua 11:1; 19:15). Atop the tel, a 1,200-square-meter mudbrick complex raised the height of the prominent mound by an additional 5 meters (16 feet). The complex may have had an as-yet unknown religious significance.

Within the complex, a fully intact “corbelled vault” framed a descending passageway—the first such Mesopotamian-style arch ever found in the southern Levant. The perfect preservation of the mudbrick archway, replete with decorative edging (all of which would typically disintegrate over time) was apparently due to the fact that it was filled in with gravel in antiquity. Only a short length of the descending passage has been investigated; the archaeologists, who have since refilled it (to maintain preservation), hope to return to the site to continue investigating where it goes.



Aerial view of corridor and descent into corbelled vault



The vaulted mudbrick passageway



The ancient gate passage at Tel Erani

## 8 PATRIARCHAL-PERIOD CURRENCY



Hacksilver from Tel el-Ajjul

A study published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* concluded that silver pieces (“hacksilver”) were used as currency in the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age (first half of the second millennium B.C.E.). It was initially believed that silver currency hoards in the Southern Levant were an Iron Age (1200–586 B.C.E.) phenomenon. This discovery, however, sheds light on much earlier commercial interactions—at least as early as the 17th century B.C.E., some 500 years earlier than the generally accepted time frame.

Not every silver hoard can necessarily be designated a currency hoard. The latest report clarifies, however, that the hoards discovered at Gezer, Shiloh and Tel el-Ajjul were not found in the context of silversmith tools or a workshop (i.e. production off-cuts). Rather, they were specifically collected for their intrinsic value and hence were deemed silver currency hoards. There are no silver mines in Israel; isotopic testing shows the silver hoards to have originated in Turkey (the ancient territory of the Hittites)—thus, pointing to trade or political interactions with the region.

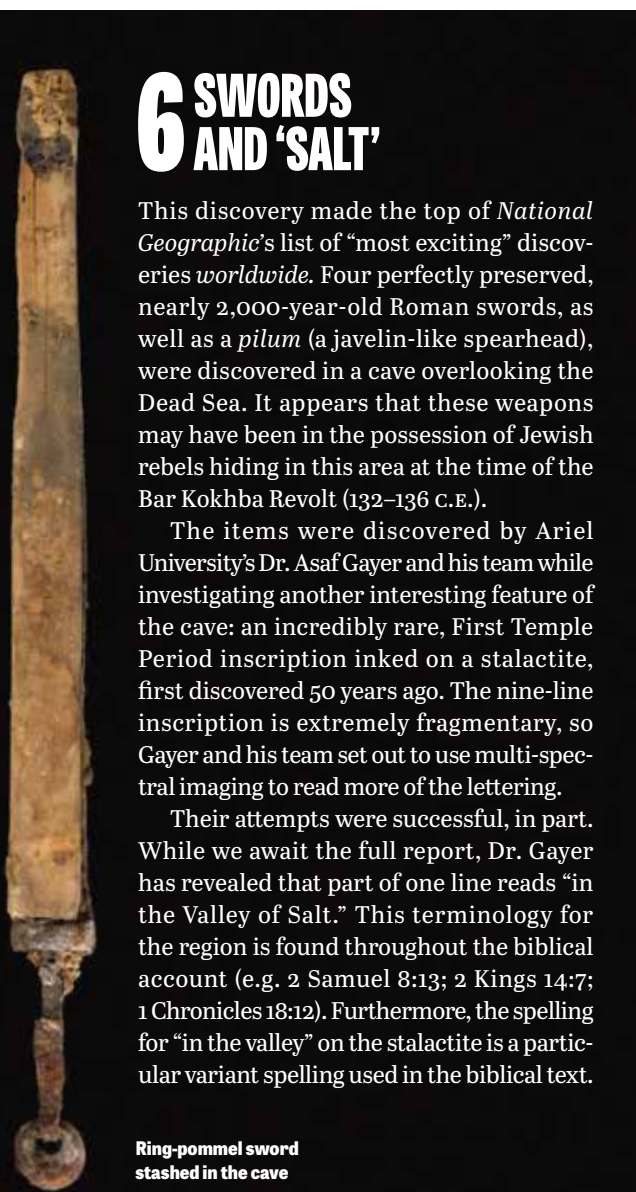
This discovery, and the time frame in question, parallels the biblical account of the use of weighed silver pieces as currency at the time of the biblical patriarchs (first half of the second millennium B.C.E.). For example, Abraham’s purchase of land from Ephron the Hittite in Genesis 23:16: “[A]nd Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the hearing of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.”

stone-and-mudbrick passageway, flanked by twin towers. Archaeologists also discovered a portion of a 7-to-8-meter-wide (23 to 26 feet) fortification system. According to excavation director Emily Bischoff: “This is the first time that such a large gate dating to the Early Bronze Age has been uncovered. ... The fortification system is evidence of social organization that represents the beginning of urbanization.”

## 7 ANCIENT ISRAELITE DNA

The discovery of a rare, clean and clear First Temple Period Israelite family burial at Kirjath Jearim, with sufficiently preserved remains, has allowed archaeologists for the first time to recover ancient Israelite DNA.

Kirjath Jearim is biblically significant (as a resting place for the ark of the covenant, 1 Samuel 7:1). The use of this tomb dates to the eighth to seventh centuries B.C.E. While the DNA retrieved belongs to just two individuals, it is an important start that researchers can use. It will open a significant door in the study of the ancient Israelites and their genetic makeup.



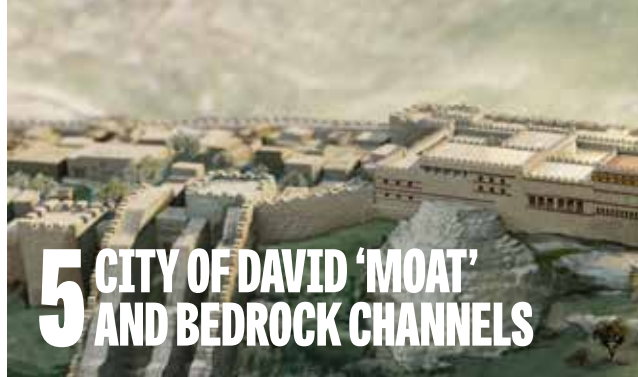
## 6 SWORDS AND 'SALT'

This discovery made the top of *National Geographic's* list of “most exciting” discoveries worldwide. Four perfectly preserved, nearly 2,000-year-old Roman swords, as well as a *pilum* (a javelin-like spearhead), were discovered in a cave overlooking the Dead Sea. It appears that these weapons may have been in the possession of Jewish rebels hiding in this area at the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–136 C.E.).

The items were discovered by Ariel University's Dr. Asaf Gayer and his team while investigating another interesting feature of the cave: an incredibly rare, First Temple Period inscription inked on a stalactite, first discovered 50 years ago. The nine-line inscription is extremely fragmentary, so Gayer and his team set out to use multi-spectral imaging to read more of the lettering.

Their attempts were successful, in part. While we await the full report, Dr. Gayer has revealed that part of one line reads “in the Valley of Salt.” This terminology for the region is found throughout the biblical account (e.g. 2 Samuel 8:13; 2 Kings 14:7; 1 Chronicles 18:12). Furthermore, the spelling for “in the valley” on the stalactite is a particular variant spelling used in the biblical text.

Ring-pommel sword stashed in the cave



## 5 CITY OF DAVID 'MOAT' AND BEDROCK CHANNELS

If you thought you knew Jerusalem topography, think again! This year, a remarkable topographical feature was revealed in the City of David's ongoing Givati Parking Lot excavations—a massive west-east void in the bedrock of the city, effectively separating the Ophel ridge to the north, and City of David ridge to the south.

Unfortunately, according to the excavators, there was “no direct evidence for dating the hewing of the ditch”—but nonetheless, “it was certainly in use prior to the Late Iron IIIA–Early Iron IIB, at which point it was reused for a different purpose.” This moat-like ditch was evidently an intentional separation of the upper part of Jerusalem from the lower. In their report of the

## 4 CORE CITIES OF DAVID'S KINGDOM

Prof. Yosef Garfinkel is well known for his famous Davidic-period site Khirbet Qeiyafa—an unusual, largely single-use site radiocarbon-dated to an extremely tight window of use (between 1020–980 B.C.E.). Utilizing his discoveries at the site, Professor Garfinkel published a new research article in 2023 reviewing other, less-securely dated regional sites that parallel Khirbet Qeiyafa in layout and material culture: Beth Shemesh, Tell en-Nasbeh and Khirbet ed-Dawwara. He proposed them as evidence of an emerging 10th-century B.C.E. core administrative kingdom of David and Solomon (and later, Rehoboam).

Professor Garfinkel identified in particular a unique, Judean-style casemate wall construction around the cities, with a peripheral belt of residential buildings attached to and incorporating the casemate walls, as well as an inner peripheral street. He also noted parallel material cultures, logical geographical positioning of the cities in relation to one another, and a good fit in dating to within the early to mid-10th century B.C.E.

He demonstrated that these cities are evidence of a core, preplanned Davidic kingdom that emerged at the time, reflecting deliberate city planning across the region and the expansion of the kingdom into the



discovery, the researchers note the feature in the context of several other monumental Iron IIA construction projects, including the Stepped Stone Structure and Large Stone Structure (King David’s palace) and Ophel royal quarter—“part of the same royal mindset that dramatically changed the urban landscape ... in the formative moments of Iron Age Jerusalem.”

Together with the moat, a series of adjacent peculiar bedrock channels were discovered. Speculation abounds as to the reason for these fingerlike channels—perhaps for soaking flax for the production of linen, or for the production of date honey.



Lachish



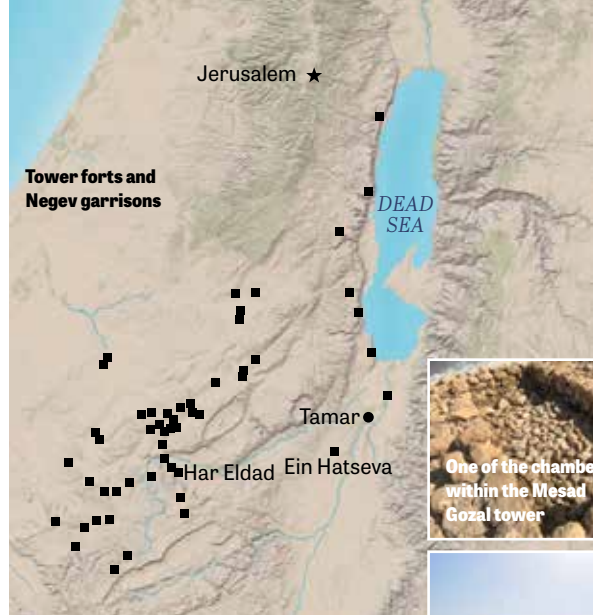
Tell en-Nasbeh



Khirbet Qeiyafa

Shephelah (Judean lowlands) during the early 10th century B.C.E.

Finally, Garfinkel highlighted his recent excavations at Lachish, paralleling the above parameters, except for exhibiting a new, solid wall construction (instead of a casemate). The Bible states that David’s grandson Rehoboam fortified Lachish (2 Chronicles 11:8-9). After excavating the northeast corner of Lachish, Garfinkel’s team discovered a previously unknown solid city wall. Through carbon dating, they were able to narrow its construction window to the end of the 10th century and beginning of the ninth, synchronizing well with the biblical period of Rehoboam.



### 3 DAVID’S EDMITE GARRISONS



One of the chambers within the Mesad Gozal tower



Mesad Mazal

Following the outbreak of the war on October 7, in solidarity with the war effort, the IAA hosted an online lecture series titled “We Will Not Be Defeated: From Crisis to Revival in the Archaeology of the Land of Israel.” Archaeologist and long-time inspector for the Southern Negev Dr. Tali Erickson-Gini presented a new compilation of evidence—the product of new and old research—demonstrating a chain of Davidic-era fortresses throughout the southern territory of Edom, paralleling several biblical verses that speak to the same. “And he [David] put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David” (2 Samuel 8:14).

Erickson-Gini highlighted dozens of garrisons positioned throughout the southern territory, whose use dates to the early Iron Age—ending in the latter part of the 10th century B.C.E. (at the time of Pharaoh Shishak/Shoshenq I’s invasion). She highlighted the military nature of these outposts and the fact that they guard strategic locations. They have parallel layouts and Iron IIA pottery culture—in some cases directly matching that found to the north, in 10th-century Judahite sites. She also featured more recent discoveries, in particular at one fortress (Ein Hatseva) whose remains were carbon-dated to the 10th century B.C.E., and the use of another (Har Eldad) whose remains were carbon-dated to around 1000 B.C.E.—the time period of King David.

Dr. Erickson-Gini concluded: “From my knowledge of these places, where they’re placed along the roads, the topography, I don’t think that there’s any doubt that we’re talking about something to do with some kind of fortifications in the Negev Highlands, and control of this region between Edom and the area of Judah under the united monarchy.”

The Solomonic six-chambered gate and attached, palatial administrative building at Tel Gezer

## 2 SOLOMONIC GEZER AFTER ALL

Of all the discoveries in 2023, this one potentially proves the most consequential: A new radiocarbon dataset proves that Gezer's Stratum 8—the impressive “Solomonic” city—*does* date to the early to mid-10th century B.C.E.

For traditional archaeologists, this is not news. Beginning with Prof. Yigael Yadin in the 1950s, these monumental remains—most notably, a large six-chambered gate, paralleling six-chambered gatehouses discovered at Megiddo and Hazor—have been associated with the 10th-century reign of Solomon and 1 Kings 9:15: “And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build ... Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.”

Excavations at these three sites by Yadin, Prof. William Dever and Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor have served to reinforce this conclusion. In the last several decades, however, a prominent “low chronology” camp emerged, seeking to down-date such “Solomonic” remains to the *ninth* century B.C.E. Suffice it to say, sparks have flown in this debate, with Gezer's Dever and Hazor's Ben-Tor doggedly maintaining the original, 10th-century dating.

Regarding Gezer, one highlighted weakness in this debate was the lack of a thorough, radiocarbon-dated chronology. However, the carbon results of 10 seasons of excavations by the Tandy team at Gezer were finally published in 2023. Naturally, most of the interest in this report surrounded Stratum 8—the monumental gatehouse, palatial structure and casemate wall.

The radiocarbon samples taken from this stratum date resoundingly to “the first part of the 10th century B.C.E.” Not only that, samples taken from the *following* stratum that canceled it out—Stratum 7—also date to the 10th century (the latter part). Taken together, this new evidence upends entirely the long-fought, revisionist ninth-century, low-chronology theory for the site.

## 1 'QUEEN OF SHEBA' SHERD

This discovery is close to our hearts. This item, known as the Ophel Pithos Inscription, was discovered by our team in 2012 on the Ophel, under the direction of our beloved Dr. Eilat Mazar. At the time, speculation abounded regarding the identity of this earliest alphabetic script ever discovered in Jerusalem. Was it Canaanite? Hebrew? Several letter forms looked odd for either option.

The seven-letter text (broken at both ends) was explained with various tentative suggestions but no real conclusions. A significant question mark remained over this item.

That is, until early 2023. Epigrapher Dr. Daniel Vainstub, who had been studying the enigmatic Ancient South Arabian (ASA) script, returned to this item, noting that *all* of the otherwise-peculiar letter forms have good parallel with the South Arabian script. Furthermore, in recognizing the text as ASA, he was able to propose the following reading: “...šy ladanum, 5 [...]”



Ladanum (*Cistus ladaniferus*) is an incense ingredient and particular item of trade known from the southern Arabian peninsula (the territory of Saba/Sheba). It is identified with the biblical tabernacle/temple incense ingredient שחלת (e.g. Exodus 30:34). To this end, the location of the sherd was also notable, given its proximity to the temple—found barely 50 meters from the Temple Mount. Furthermore, the ASA letter representing the quantity *five* is a good fit because these pithoi are known to have a volume of five

*ephahs* (a standard biblical measurement). Given all of this, alongside the 10th-century B.C.E. dating of the sherd, Dr. Vainstub noted the item as a good parallel to the biblical account of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon, “with a very great train, with camels that bore *spices*” (1 Kings 10:2). The artifact logically constitutes evidence for the establishment of such “spice” trade between the kingdoms. “[T]here came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon” (verse 10). ■





# IS THIS MOSES?

No evidence of the man in Egyptian history—  
so goes the common refrain. Or is there?

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

**I**T'S ONE OF THE BIGGEST QUESTIONS IN THE world of biblical archaeology: Who was the pharaoh of the Exodus? We explored this question in detail in the March-April 2023 issue of *Let the Stones Speak* (see [ArmstrongInstitute.org/882](https://ArmstrongInstitute.org/882).) But what about Pharaoh's archrival? Is there evidence for Moses in ancient Egypt?

For skeptics, the answer is simple: *No. Moses is a fictional biblical character for whom we have no archaeological evidence.* Others might give a more nuanced version of “No,” one that recognizes the remarkable Egyptianisms throughout the Torah that hint at the author's familiarity with Egyptian culture (see “Searching for Egypt in Israel” at [ArmstrongInstitute.org/680](https://ArmstrongInstitute.org/680)). Is it true—is there really *no* evidence of Moses?

There *is* one particular prince in New Kingdom Period Egyptian history who, in many respects, remarkably parallels the biblical account of Moses. The similarities are so close, one key proponent believes the evidence is secure—that this Egyptian prince is “the very same man known as Moses, traditional author of the Old Testament book of Exodus and the other four books of the Pentateuch. Boom. *Period.*”

Has the question of Moses's identity in Egyptian history finally been solved?

## Laying the Groundwork

First, we need a basic chronological framework. As we established in “Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?”, the Exodus occurred in the 15th century B.C.E. (Granted, there is significant debate on this

issue; our article explains this time frame in detail.) In short, 1 Kings 6:1 establishes that 480 years elapsed between the Exodus and the construction of Solomon's temple, which is widely accepted to have begun in 967 B.C.E. (see [ArmstrongInstitute.org/1000](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/1000)). This places the Exodus at 1446 B.C.E.; Israel's entrance into Canaan 40 years later, in 1406 B.C.E.; and the conquest of Canaan on into the early 14th century B.C.E. Several other biblical passages point to this same general time frame (e.g. Judges 11:26 and 1 Chronicles 6).

This time frame for the Exodus, which is based on the biblical text, aligns remarkably well with the archaeological record. For example, in the "Amarna Letters" (14th century B.C.E.), panicked Canaanite leaders describe an invading people referred to as "Habiru" (i.e. Hebrews) taking "all the lands."

This overall chronological picture also matches remarkably well with the general flow of Egyptian history. As outlined in "Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?", following a high chronology timeline puts the pacifist Amarna period pharaoh, Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, as the pharaoh during the conquest of Canaan (a pharaoh also notable for his upheaval of Egypt's polytheistic religious system and rejection of the name "Amenhotep"). It places his father, Amenhotep III, as pharaoh of the wilderness sojourn—another notably pacifist pharaoh, from whose reign we find our first reference to nomads worshiping "YHWH" (and whose reign is also notable for an emphasis on Sekhmet, the goddess of healing). And this puts his father, Thutmose IV, as sudden successor to the Exodus pharaoh—Thutmose IV was a non-firstborn, who assumed the throne under dubious circumstances (as justified on his Dream Stele).

This makes Amenhotep II (also a non-firstborn) as pharaoh of the Exodus. (Interestingly, the third-century B.C.E. Egyptian priest-historian Manetho identifies the Exodus pharaoh by the name "Amenophis"—the later Greek form of *Amenhotep*.) Amenhotep II's reign began with remarkable fury and conquest, with the pharaoh swiftly making a name for himself for his level of sadistic cruelty. Yet this is a pharaoh for whom we know next-to-nothing about the latter part of his reign—save for a warning to his viceroy to be wary of foreigners and magicians (the Semna Stele of Usersatet). That, and a mummified body—if it is really his—covered in peculiar tubercles.

This makes Amenhotep II's father, the long-reigning Thutmose III—arguably Egypt's greatest pharaoh—as the primary pharaoh of the oppression, during whose tenure Moses fled into the wilderness. It puts Thutmose III's stepmother, Hatshepsut, as the biblical "pharaoh's daughter"—a woman who went on to become a powerful ruler in her own right, yet one

whose inscriptions attest to a "heart full of love," whose "spirits inclined toward foreign people" (and whose monuments, strangely enough, were vandalized and defaced during the rule of our Exodus pharaoh, Amenhotep II). It puts her sickly brother-husband, Thutmose II (father of Thutmose III) and their father, Thutmose I, as the former rulers of Egypt, leading the land as described in the first part of Exodus 2. And it puts Thutmose I's predecessor, Kamose, as the king of Exodus 1 who "knew not Joseph." Kamose was a pharaoh of southern Egypt, who initiated a campaign to overthrow the foreign Semitic rulers of northern Egypt and bring the Delta under sole Egyptian rule, with a decree (the Carnavon Tablet) reading remarkably similar to Exodus 1:8-10. (Kamose was killed during battle, but the overthrow was completed by his brother Ahmose I, who initiated the New Kingdom Period and 18th Dynasty of Egypt. See [ArmstrongInstitute.org/835](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/835) for more detail.)

Within this framework, we can now focus on the period in question—namely the late 16th century B.C.E., with the princess-cum-queen/Pharaoh Hatshepsut, and the remarkable rags-to-riches (to disappearance) story of a princely figure within her administration.

## Hatshepsut: Egypt's Greatest 'Pharaoh's Daughter'

The Bible says that Moses lived 120 years and that his lifespan was divided into three equal parts. He spent his first 40 years as a prince in Egypt, then another 40 years as an outcast in Midian, and the final 40 years as leader of the Israelites (Exodus 7:7; Numbers 14:33; Deuteronomy 29:4; 34:7, etc). Moses died just prior to the Israelites crossing into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 31:2). Applying this detail to Israel's entry date into Canaan (circa 1406 B.C.E.) places Moses's birth at around 1526 B.C.E.

This would place his birth somewhere within the reign of Pharaoh Thutmose I. Within a fairly typical high chronology framework, the reign of Thutmose I is dated to 1526–1512 B.C.E. Prof. Douglas Petrovich provides a slightly earlier time frame, circa 1529–1516 B.C.E. Antonio Crasto provides an even earlier reign, circa 1532–1519 B.C.E.

The royal family of Thutmose I is extremely interesting. This pharaoh sired a *fully* royal daughter, Hatshepsut (born through his Great Royal Wife Ahmose), and a *half*-royal son, Thutmose II (born through his minor wife, Mutnofret). In order to secure his son's place on Egypt's throne, the dying Thutmose I had his 18-year-old son marry his 24-year-old half-sister.

The repeated biblical emphasis to the *pharaoh's daughter* is doubly interesting in the context of the court intrigue at this time. After all, this was the same

emphasis placed on *Hatshepsut* as the fully-royal daughter of the pharaoh; it was also a position and title Hatshepsut continued to highlight on her monuments during her reign, long after her father Thutmose I's death.

Applying standard high chronology dates, Hatshepsut was about 10 years old at the time of the biblical Moses's "discovery." Petrovich puts her at 12 years old, and applying Crasto's chronology to our dates for Moses and the Exodus would make her around 15 years old.

Thutmose II's reign, with Hatshepsut as his sister-queen, was neither long nor impressive. He was a sickly pharaoh, who did not produce a male heir through Hatshepsut (instead, she bore him a daughter, Neferure). Like his father, Thutmose II, however, did bear a male heir—Thutmose III—through a concubine named Iset.

Thutmose III was just 2 years old when his father died. As such, his stepmother Hatshepsut initiated a 22-year coregency, during which she became a truly remarkable pharaoh in her own right.

Egyptologist Sir William Flinders Petrie (the "father of Egyptian archaeology," 1853–1942) noted that Pharaoh Hatshepsut's "activity seems to have been entirely given to peaceful enterprises" in "an age of tranquility to the realm" (*A History of Egypt*, Vol. II). One remarkable inscription on the facade of her temple at Speos Artemidos reads, in part: "[M]y spirits *inclined toward foreign people* ... the people Roshau and Iuu did not hide themselves from me" (emphasis added throughout). Another inscription describes a "heart full of love." These extraordinary sentiments fit well with the biblical description of a "pharaoh's daughter" who would bring up a foreign child from poverty and catapult him into princedom.

Coincidentally, during the reign of Hatshepsut, a "commoner" was catapulted in rank to the highest levels of Egyptian administration and princedom.

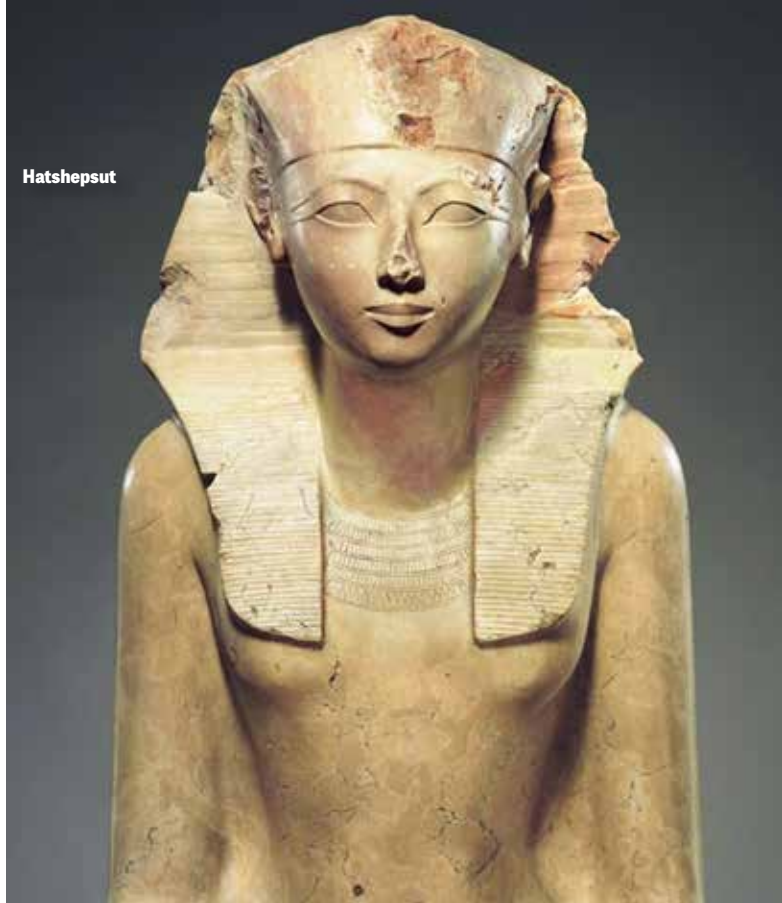
### Introducing 'Mother's Brother'

Egyptian records clearly show this man was of decidedly non-royal, common origin. Yet by the end of his life in Egypt—prior to his mysterious *disappearance* in the early-mid 1480s B.C.E.—he had risen to the highest ranks of Egyptian society.

This prince is referred to commonly as *Senenmut* (alternatively, *Senmut*). Author and investigative journalist Scott Alan Roberts identifies this individual as Moses. (Antonio Crasto likewise identifies *Senenmut* as Moses in his Italian-language article "Senenmut").

"Let's cut to the quick. Senenmut, favored courtier to Pharaoh Hatshepsut, is the very same man we know as Moses," Roberts states in his 2014 book *The*

Hatshepsut



These extraordinary sentiments fit well with the biblical description of a "pharaoh's daughter" who would bring up a foreign child from poverty and catapult him into princedom.

*Exodus Reality* (coauthored with John Richard Ward). "Senenmut lived under the gracious and benevolent eye of Hatshepsut, some accounts even hailing to their relationship as possible lovers, despite the nearly 10-year age difference between them."

This originally non-royal individual stunningly came to be "granted nearly 90 titles bestowed on him by Hatshepsut, including Hereditary Crowned Prince of Egypt, Count, Sole Companion, Master of All People, Chief of the Whole Land, Royal Vizier, and Chief Royal Architect. ... Senenmut's royal appointments included: chief steward who conducted all the works of the king ... confidant of the king, privy councilor of the right hand, chief steward of the Princess Neferure [Hatshepsut's daughter]. Senenmut's administrative titles included: wearer of the royal seal, steward of Amun, overseer of the granary of Amun, overseer of the storehouse of Amun ... Senenmut's religious titles included: ... chief of the prophets of Montu in Hermonthis."

As summarized in *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh* (edited by Catharine Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus

and Cathleen Keller), “Senenmut held so many offices that it is difficult to see how he was capable of carrying out even a fraction of the duties associated with them.”

Our first question, of course, must concern the name. Why not “Moses”? According to Roberts, “A significant title she [Hatshepsut] bestowed ... was in the changing of his name to Senenmut, which means ‘mother’s brother.’ In essence, it was a title elevating a son to the status of equal with his mother, allowing him to claim equal status of ‘brother to the gods’ with this pharaonic parent.”

Indeed, Egyptian leaders commonly bore several names (one of the things that makes cross-identification between ancient sources especially difficult). The Egyptian historian Manetho dually references Moses using another Egyptian name in the Egyptian courts, while being referred to as “Moses” by the Israelites, as quoted by first-century Jewish historian Josephus (*Against Apion* 1.26). And in this overall context, the otherwise-unusual name “Senenmut” would make sense, befitting an adoptive child of the young pharaoh’s daughter—in this case, with Hatshepsut recognizing herself figuratively as both “mother” and “brother” to this individual.

## Humble Origins

Senenmut’s humble origins are widely known. His parents carried no royal titles, and his father—who died prior to his rise to any significant power—was initially given a very simple burial. Continuing from *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*: “Senenmut may justifiably be described as one of the most eminent and influential personages of the 18th Dynasty, yet nothing about his beginnings suggests future greatness. His parents were of relatively lowly origin and neither seems to have risen to prominence or held any administrative or religious office.” It seems that as Senenmut grew in power, he was gradually able to afford them a somewhat better reburial.

Still, mystery surrounds his family, including his parents, referred to simply as “Ramose and Hatnofer” (*Ramose*, not greatly dissimilar to the biblical name for Moses’s father, *Am-ram*) who are sometimes described

as “provincial” or “peasants.” Roehrig et al. continue (in the context of Senenmut’s parents and relatives): “Indeed, there is much we do not know about population groups in Egypt. Three women from the Levant were taken into the harem of Thutmose III; their ethnic identity would not have been learned had their West Semitic names not been written on their funerary goods. However, immigrants often took Egyptian names, or their names were not recorded at all, leaving us only their bodies, possessions, and possibly grave types to tell their story. What are we to make for instance, for the women with braided hair buried quite simply in the tomb of Senenmut’s parents?” Further, of their internment, “two rectangular coffins contained six additional mummies, all anonymous and almost certainly close family members.”

It appears that Senenmut’s gradual rise to power began during the reign of Hatshepsut’s father, Thutmose I (thus the biblical “pharaoh” of the “pharaoh’s daughter”). And part of his initial rise appears to be in the context of *military prowess against the Ethiopians*.

## Senenmut’s Exploits

Senenmut appears to have risen through the ranks in military service from his late teens onward. Crasto notes that he participated in military campaigns in the land of Kush (Ethiopia) during the reign of Thutmose I. He appears to have attained rank, perhaps as “brigade commander.” For those familiar with the classical accounts of Moses’s life, this is significant—because while his exploits in Ethiopia are not mentioned in the Bible (with only the faintest hint given in Numbers 12:1), they *are* mentioned, at length, by certain classical historians.

Josephus dedicates an entire chapter of *Antiquities of the Jews* to Moses’s military exploits in Ethiopia (*Antiquities* 2.10). A similar account comes from the third-century B.C.E. Jewish historian Artapanus (see [ArmstrongInstitute.org/2](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/2)).

It was not, however, until Hatshepsut became queen, and later sole ruler, that Senenmut began to be catapulted in rank with the litany of titles she applied to

## SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

NEW

JACOB AND HIS FAMILY ENTER EGYPT  
C. 1660

MOSES BORN  
C. 1526

DISAPPEARANCE INTO MIDIAN  
C. 1486

<<17TH DYNASTY, EGYPT DIVIDED BETWEEN UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT

AHMOSE I  
1570-1546

AMENHOTEP I  
1546-1526

THUTMOSE I  
1526-1512

THUT-  
MOSE II  
1512-  
1504

HAT SHEPSUT  
1504-1483

THUTMOSE III  
1504-1451

1650

1600

1550

1500

14

him—so much so, that Egyptologist Prof. Joyce Tyldesley refers to him as the “Greatest of the Great” in the court of Hatshepsut, her “most influential courtier” (*Hatchepsut: The Female Pharaoh*). “Effectively, Senenmut was ruler of Egypt,” she writes.

The greatest sign of how incredibly *close* these two became was the proximity between Senenmut and the daughter of Hatshepsut, Neferure, whom he tutored. Normally, non-royals were not allowed in the presence of royalty, let alone the daughter of a pharaoh. “[T]he representation in sculpture of a royal [Neferure] and a nonroyal [Senenmut] person together is *unprecedented* and abrogates a number of seemingly inviolate rules of Egyptian art,” Roehrig et al. explain. “These include the general conventions that a royal person, even a child, is represented in a larger scale than non-royalty; that a royal individual is never touched except by another royal person or a deity; and that a royal person never interacts in an obvious way with (let alone touches) a person of lower rank.”

T. George Allen, in his 1927 article “A Unique Statue of Senmut,” calls these statues a “startling innovation. That he [Senenmut], an ordinary, non-royal person, should venture to have himself portrayed, and not once but five times at least, in such intimate association with a scion of god-descended royalty, is a final proof of his queen’s unparalleled graciousness.”

Even the general quantity of statues relating to this man are remarkable. “Because so many of Senenmut’s statues have survived—the size of his corpus is paralleled only by that of royalty” (*Hatchepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*).

Yet “[l]acking distinguished lineage, Senenmut could not, like some of his illustrious contemporaries, suggest his participation in a cycle of eternal renewal by depicting his extended family. Nor did he, apparently, have



TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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any children, so there would be no future generations to maintain his funerary cult; he stood alone” (ibid).

This is another remarkable peculiarity that is often pointed out, for an individual in such high office: *his lack of wife and children*. But this again matches perfectly with the biblical account of Moses while in the courts of Egypt.

Still, Senenmut’s closeness to the queen naturally led to rumors of an affair between them. To this day, a lewd graffito can be found of them, left by an ancient workman on a hidden stone surface at Deir el-Bahari. (Theories of a “romantic connection” between Hatshepsut and Senenmut are largely debunked in Peter Dorman’s 1988 study, *The Monuments of Senenmut: Problems in Historical Methodology*.)

### Royal Architect

One of the greatest achievements attributed to Senenmut is in his role as royal architect, overseeing the construction of Hatshepsut’s grand mortuary complex at Deir el-Bahari. This complex, built against a cliff face, remains one of the veritable wonders of the ancient world, known for its architectural proportioning and perfection. It consists of a large, colonnaded courtyard complex centered around an inner sanctum “Djeser Djeseru” (“Holy of Holies”).

Such architectural connections are also interesting in light of the biblical Moses. Moses, of course, oversaw the construction of the tabernacle, as well as the construction of another “pillared” complex in the desert against a mountainside (Exodus 24:4). Even the

## KINGDOM PERIOD





Mortuary temple of Hatshepsut

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biblical account of Moses and the Hebrew workmen is interesting in this context (Exodus 2:11-14). What was he doing at this construction site, manned by Hebrews and Egyptians? Was Moses working in an administrative position, as “ruler and a judge,” primarily over the Egyptian workmen? (verse 14). Could this event have taken place at a site like Deir el-Bahari?

In addition to the construction of Hatshepsut’s mortuary complex, like any high-ranking member of Egyptian administration, Senenmut had his own sufficiently respectable twin-tomb complex constructed (Tomb 71 and Tomb 353). These tombs contain several fascinating and unique details, such as a detailed star-map ceiling—the earliest star-map ever discovered in Egypt (leading to speculation that Senenmut was also an astronomer). Professor Tyldesley describes: “[T]he unique astronomical ceiling in his Tomb 353 ... and the eclectic variety of texts and ostraca included in Tomb 71 (ranging from plans of the tomb itself through various calculations to the *Story of Sinhue*), certainly suggests that Senenmut was a cultured and well-rounded man with a wide range of interests extending far beyond his official duties.”

*But Senenmut was never buried in his tomb.* In fact, his tombs were *never even finished* but, instead, were prematurely closed. “[T]he decorated chamber in Tomb 353 was abandoned and sealed while still full of excavated chip and workmen’s tools, and his quartzite sarcophagus was left unfinished in the corridors of Tomb 71” (*Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*).

It appears Senenmut, for whatever reason, *completely disappeared without a trace*.

### Sudden Disappearance

“Senenmut’s sudden disappearance is one which has teased Egyptologists for decades, the lack of solid archaeological and textual evidence allowing the vivid imaginations of Senenmut-scholars to run wild, and resulting in a variety of fervently held solutions, some of which would do credit to any fictional murder-mystery plot,” Tyldesley continues.

A “murder-mystery plot”—words that might be more apropos than intended. Because this was, of course, the entire premise of *Moses’s* sudden disappearance from Egypt.

“[W]e have no dated references to Senenmut after year 18–19” of the Hatshepsut/Thutmose III coregency (*Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*). “He is shown with Princess Neferure on a stela of year 11, at Sinai, and the last dated document containing his name is an informal record of conscript labor, on an ostrakon from year 16” (*ibid*).

Standard high chronology, which places the beginning of the Hatshepsut/Thutmose III coregency circa 1504 B.C.E., would put this final mention of Senenmut (Year 18–19) at circa 1486 B.C.E.—the 40th year of our biblical Moses. (Other chronological variants, such as that of Petrovich and Crasto, would put this final discovered mention of Senenmut a few years earlier.)

Roberts notes this remarkable synchronism: “[S]omewhere around 1486–1485 B.C.E., Senenmut disappears completely off the Egyptian scene. Incidentally, if you’re keeping up on the mathematics, if Moses was born in 1526 B.C.E., he would have turned 40 in 1486 B.C.E., the same year he is said to have murdered the Egyptian

taskmaster and fled Egypt—and the *same approximate year that Senenmut completely disappears from Egypt*. ... [T]he chronology of his life is a *perfect* match. And the fact that he leaves without anything ever being said about it in the Egyptian record might be an indicator of who he truly is.”

But a clue as to where he went might be gleaned from his literature library. As mentioned, a copy of the 12th Dynasty Egyptian literary epic, the *Story of Sinhue*, was found in his tomb. This classic describes the protagonist, Sinhue, fleeing Egypt into the Levant in order to escape the pharaoh’s wrath, following the assassination of King Amenemhet I. It describes Sinhue dwelling with Bedouin and marrying the daughter of a chieftain.

Egyptologist Prof. James Hoffmeier notes that, despite several key differences, “[t]hese same features are found in the story of Moses in Exodus. ... These striking similarities between the main elements in the stories of Sinuhe and Moses have, surprisingly, not attracted the attention of biblical scholars” (*Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*).

One wonders: Could Senenmut (who would have been familiar with this epic) have used it as a model for his own course of action in fleeing Egypt, following the murder of an Egyptian workman?

### **Damnatio Memoriae**

The disappearance of Senenmut is not the end of the story. After his departure, many of his monuments and inscriptions suffered the curse of *damnatio memoriae*, the intentional erasure (“damnation of memory”). It’s interesting too that the same fate befell the monuments of Hatshepsut.

“Senenmut suffered a series of posthumous attacks on his memory. ... Like so much in the life of Senenmut, the reason for the attacks on inscriptions of his name remains for the moment a mystery” (*Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*).

Egyptologist Prof. Alan Schulman wrote that “his two tombs ... apparently had been thoroughly vandalized, with his name and portraits maliciously and vindictively expunged ... the splendid quartzite sarcophagus which had been found in his first tomb (nr. 71) had been shattered into fragments .... [Senenmut] had been the victim of someone’s implacable hatred,” claiming Thutmose III as responsible (“Some Remarks on the Alleged ‘Fall’ of Senmut,” 1969).

Roberts differs, as to earlier theories of Thutmose III being responsible for the *damnatio memoriae* of Hatshepsut and Senenmut. “[N]ewer information states that Thutmose III did not disgrace or remove any of her images ... it was not done under the order of Thutmose III. *It was his son, Amenhotep II* [our Pharaoh

of the Exodus], *who ordered their removal*. And what’s even more interesting is that at the same time he removed the images of Hatshepsut, *he also removes all images of... Senenmut*” (ibid).

Why?

A reconstruction of events following the biblical account of Moses and the “pharaoh’s daughter” would explain *exactly* why. This *damnatio memoriae* was not entirely complete, however. Several of Senenmut’s statues and inscriptions survived—one of which bears the strange inscription: “The steward Senmut it is *who has come forth from the flood* and to whom has been given the inundation, that he may control it; *even the Nile*.”

Could this individual, after all, really be *the individual of infamy*, the man who was *brought forth from the Nile*—could it be Moses?

You will have to form your own opinion. Personally, I was initially skeptical. It seemed like a story “too good to be true” and one that would come apart in the details. Yet while there are some unknowns, the more I research the history, the more plausible it becomes.

This skepticism was highlighted by Scott Roberts himself: “When I was in my seminary days under the professorship of Dr. Alin, I presented my theory that Moses was raised by Hatshepsut. Even back then, some 30 years ago, the good doctor advised me to use great care, because *although the facts fit, the story borders on being far too romanticized*, that Moses should be raised by the heir to the throne rather than what was more probable in his view: a harem wife or daughter.”

In the end, whatever your conclusion about Senenmut, the question of his identity as the biblical Moses is *not* the ultimate takeaway. Instead, it is the fact that this overall picture of late 16th-early 15th century B.C.E. Egypt—politically and religiously—is a *precise* fit for the biblical sequence of events, the milieu in which the biblical Moses *could* be raised by a Pharaoh’s daughter to become “prince of Egypt.”

In the words of Professor Tyldesley: “Gradually, as her reign progressed, Hatshepsut started to appoint new advisers, many of whom were men of relatively humble birth such as Senenmut.” Could another such individual within that administration have been the biblical Moses? It is certainly possible. Ultimately, however, this benevolence toward the “humble” and “foreigners” disappeared under the iron rule of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, with the latter’s ultimate erasure of such, and his warnings against such “foreigners.”

Is there no evidence for Moses in ancient Egypt? The answer isn’t as simple or straightforward as some might claim. Truth is, it’s a fascinating question, and one that highlights some remarkable parallels between Egyptian history and the biblical text. ■

This period covers the city's transition from Jebusite to Israelite rule, through the dissolution of the united monarchy, and stops sometime in the ninth century, depending on which archaeologist you speak to. Thus, we are working with about 150 years of history.

2 Samuel 5 is a key chapter describing the history and expansion of Jerusalem at this time. Immediately following David's coronation over the northern tribes of Israel and the creation of the united monarchy, David's men took Jerusalem from the Jebusites. Israel's soldiers penetrated the city probably through some type of water shaft or gutter, indicating that the spring was accessible within the walls of the Jebusite city. Furthermore, a much earlier Middle Bronze Age fortification around the spring and associated water tunnel system shows that the earliest city had a border as far north as the line of the Gihon Spring. We know too that, at least initially, David dwelt in the fortress city of Zion (the city of the Jebusites), which he renamed the City of David (verses 6-9).

After taking Jerusalem, David went to work developing the land adjacent north of the city. "And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward" (verse 9). This verse implies that David lived inside the former Jebusite city while he was expanding the city in the only direction possible—north, up the ridge.

Note the word "Millo" in verse 9. There are many theories about the "Millo," what it was and where it was located. The word has the connotation of a filling. Regarding its situation, the most recent theory posits that it was a tower surrounding the Gihon Spring deep in Kidron Valley. Alternatively, it would be tempting to look at this new moat as perhaps related to the Millo. Certainly, at some point, the moat was *filled*. But considering the moat appears to have remained unfilled through the period of Israelite rule in Jerusalem, it is unlikely to be associated with the Millo.

Many archaeologists believe the Millo refers to the Stepped Stone Structure. Both the Stepped Stone Structure and the Large Stone Structure date to the period in which David began to reign in Jerusalem (the transition from Iron I to Iron IIA). Furthermore, while the Stepped Stone Structure is often understood to be a retaining wall, it could be more accurately described as a massive fill of uncut boulders shoring up a huge void in the bedrock along the eastern edge of the ridge. These massive boulders are hidden from view, behind the outer stepped facade of the structure, making it easy to overlook the "fill" nature of the Stepped Stone Structure.

In 2008, as a supervisor under Dr. Mazar on her City of David dig, I entered a tunnel that ran behind the Stepped Stone Structure. In some sections, the distance

between the bedrock cliff and the facade of the Stepped Stone Structure was roughly 15 meters (50 feet), indicating the monumental nature of the rock fill. The fill area is certainly large enough to be given the landmark title "Millo." Perhaps the fill used behind the Stepped Stone Structure was the rock quarried to create the moat.

When David finished the Millo, he constructed his palace with the help of the king of Tyre. As Dr. Mazar noted, after studying 2 Samuel 5:17, the palace was built on higher ground than the original Jebusite fortress: "[A]ll the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold [fortress]."

Given that both the Stepped Stone Structure and the Large Stone Structure date to the period when David conquered Jerusalem, it's logical to conclude that David's palace is the Large Stone Structure. As Mazar's excavations proved, the Large Stone Structure was built on an open area (no earlier structures were found on the site, although there was an accumulation of earth on the bedrock, up until the Iron I period).

Perhaps the moat was constructed after the Philistine invasion, with David realizing the need for a more defensive position.

According to the biblical text, King Solomon was responsible for expanding Jerusalem northward on the ridge. If the moat already existed, certainly, an expansion into the wider Ophel Hill would once again create a situation where the new northern border of the city would be under threat. Such an elaborate expansion of the city onto the other side of the moat would at least temporarily leave the new part of the city vulnerable to attack.

However, as the biblical text relates, the Solomonic era was one of peace and tranquility, which would have allowed for construction outside of the city's previous defenses. It was during the first 20 years of that peace that King Solomon created a new royal acropolis on the Ophel, which included his new palace, new armory, the temple and a new city wall that connected the new "City of Solomon" to the City of David, at which point the moat would have lost its original function as a defensive fortification (1 Kings 3:1).

This biblical description of Jerusalem's Iron I to Iron IIA expansion matches remarkably well with the archaeological data presented in the recent Givati Parking Lot report. Naturally, more archaeological excavation is needed to confirm or deny such a reconstruction.

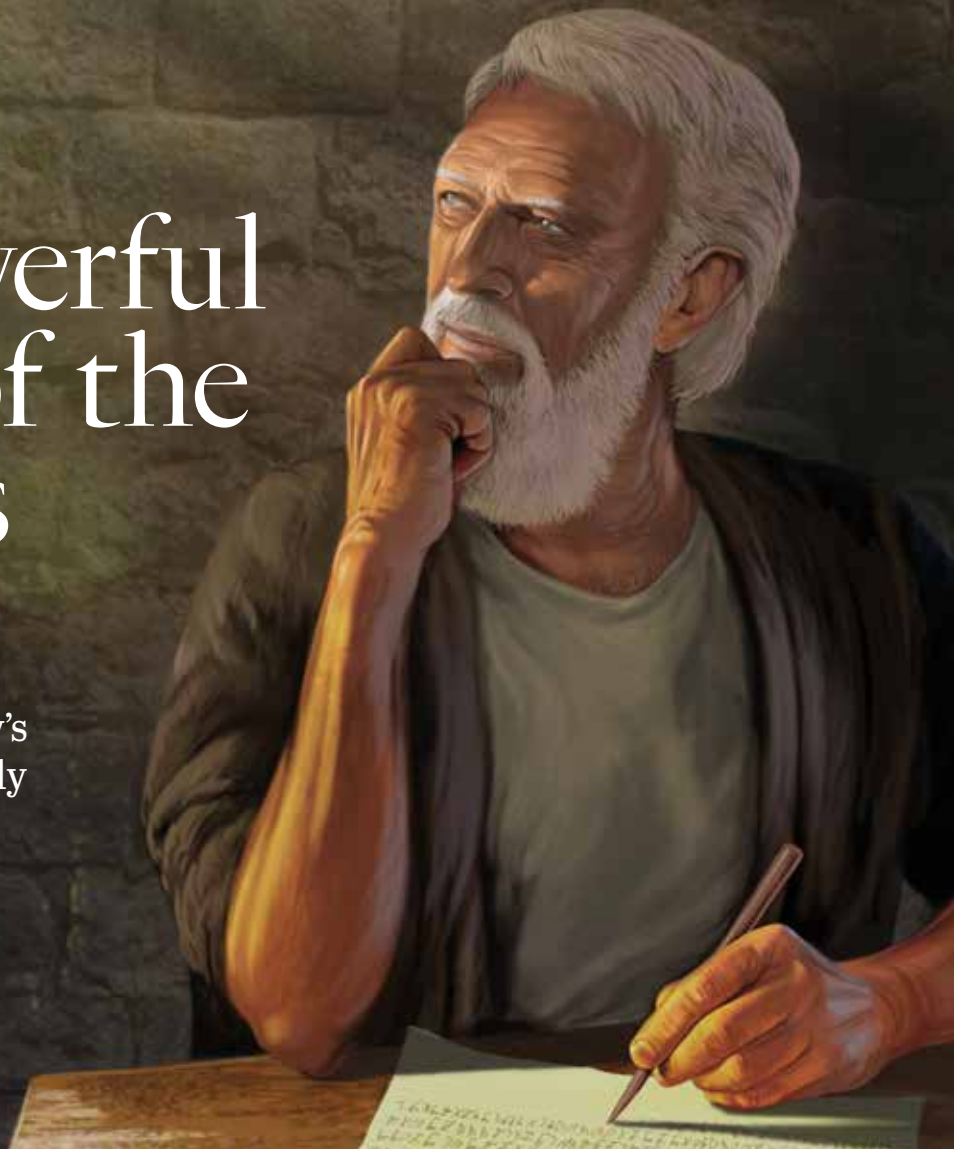
But for now, congratulations to the Givati team not only for their incredible work discovering the moat, but for their fair and accurate analysis and reporting of the excavation data. With the discovery of the moat at the northern reaches of the City of David, a new dimension of Jerusalem's epic history during the age of the early biblical kings of Judah has been revealed! ■



# The Powerful Poetry of the Hebrews

In praise of one of history's most literary and eternally influential cultures

BY RYAN MALONE



“Hallelujah” is one of the most remarkable Hebrew words because, regardless of the language in which it is sung, it basically retains its Hebrew form. As a choral conductor, vocal coach and singer who has sung in 10 languages, I can attest to this. How extraordinary that people of various languages, nations and creeds sing this *Hebrew* word.

“Hallelujah” is used at length throughout the book of Psalms. Its usage through the ages and its invincibility to translation actually embodies the impact of the Hebrew LITERARY culture as a whole.

Hebrew poetry has touched countless cultures throughout the centuries. The billions of adherents to Christianity acknowledge this. The New Testament contains hundreds of quotations, paraphrases and allusions to the Hebrew Bible, and many of these are from the *poetic* writings. The book of Psalms is the most quoted

Hebrew book in the Christian Bible, and the poetic Prophet Isaiah is the most quoted singular personality.

The English-speaking world has also acknowledged the influence of Hebraic poetry. British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli said: “Who is the most popular poet in this country? Is he to be found among the Mr. Wordsworths and the Lord Byrons, amid sauntering reveries or monologues of sublime satiety? Shall we seek him among the wits of Queen Anne? Even to the myriad-minded Shakespeare can we award the palm? No; the most popular poet in England is the sweet singer of Israel. Since the days of the heritage, when every man dwelt safely under his vine and under his fig tree, there never was a race who sang so often the odes of David as the people of Great Britain. Vast as the obligations of the whole human family are to the Hebrew race, there is no portion of the modern populations so much indebted to them as the British people.”

Disraeli credited King David as the most influential poet in England, the home of Shakespeare himself.

It shouldn't be surprising that a biblical poet's popularity would overshadow Shakespeare; the bard received much inspiration from biblical poetry. Conservative estimates count anywhere between 1,000 and 2,000 biblical references in Shakespeare's plays. His plays contain references to repentance, the sweet heavens, the sly devil, Cain and Abel, the pite of faith, and the help of angels.

In Act IV of *Hamlet*, the title character asks: "What is a man ...?" and refers to a man's Creator as "He that made us with such large discourse"—an allusion to Psalm 8. In fact, of all the books of the Bible from which Shakespeare draws, the majority of the references come from the book of Psalms.

What makes biblical Hebrew poetry so powerful?

### A POETIC OPUS

Answering this question requires a *literary* approach to the Bible rather than a theological or historical approach.

For centuries, scholars have meticulously debated what portions of the Bible are "prose" and which are "poetry."

To whatever extent Scripture can be argued as prosaic, poetic or actual poetry, experts have estimated—looking at the texts of both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament—that one third is actual poetry. And the vast majority of that is found in the *Hebrew Bible*.

Our editor in chief, Gerald Flurry, has said the poetry of the Hebrew Bible is "among the most beautiful writing in human history." He is not alone in his estimation.

In a 1559 treatise, Antonio Sebastiani Minturno wrote how "the Hebrews ..., that men the world over might receive the true knowledge of God, framed His praises in verse in so marvelous a system."

This marvelous system has captivated many.

Though psalms were "a common poetic genre throughout the ancient Near East," according to Robert Alter, it had a unique function in the Hebrew culture. His book *The Art of Biblical Poetry* states that Hebrew psalms "often became an instrument for expressing in a collective voice ... a distinctive, sometimes radically new, sense of time, space, history, creation and the character of individual destiny." This is something the Hebrews excelled at.

### VIRTUOSIC VOICE

Alter says "the ancient Hebrew literary imagination reverts again and again to a bedrock assumption about the efficacy of speech."

After all, in some cases these biblical authors were attempting to represent a deity's voice in a *linguistic* manner, which required the highest literary expressions possible.

Elaine James writes in *An Invitation to Biblical Poetry*: "Some biblical traditions figure the divine voice as non-linguistic ... like thunder—powerful, magnificent, even terrifying in its dimensions. But its linguistic expression, almost without exception, takes the form of poetry."

In portraying God's voice this way, Hebrew authors were trying to help the reader experience the divine presence more deeply.

This happens in the book of Job when the voice of God addresses all of Job's poetic complaints. Alter says this concluding speech "soars beyond everything that has preceded it in the book" and "helps us see the panorama of creation, as perhaps we could do only through poetry, with the eyes of God." This prompts Job to say: "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; But now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5).

"Referring more specifically to the impact of God's visionary poem, he announces that he has been vouchsafed the gift of sight," writes Alter. This way of representing God was valuable to writers whose religion prohibited any visual representations of a deity. So they relied on language—often *poetic* language.

"There is no attribute, no perfection of God, which did not find its most simple and powerful expression in the psalms and prophets," wrote Johann Gottfried Herder in *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*.

This is something art in general does: It creates experiences that enhance its subject—whether a painting or musical setting. Poems invite us to "see more, to hear more, to feel more," as Susan Sontag put it (*Against Interpretation*).

In so doing, these experiences make the information conveyed much more memorable. In *The Art of Memory*, Ernest Dimnet suggested the most long-lasting memories are based on "similitudes as striking as possible" and those assigned "exceptional beauty or singular ugliness." Hebrew poetry excels at this.

### LAUDABLE LANGUAGE

"[T]he ancient Hebrew language is a masterpiece of conciseness and orderly arrangement, corresponding to the impressions of sense," Herder wrote. The great biblical authors mastered this language to an impressive degree.

Hebrew lends itself to poetry for a number of reasons. One of the more subtle ones is its use of the poetic device known as *personification*—treating something

nonhuman as though it were human. This makes the reader more capable of identifying with abstract concepts, and for Hebrew, “the whole language is formed upon the principle of personification; nouns, verbs and even connecting words are constructed and arranged under its influence,” Herder wrote. “Everything with them has voice, mouth, hand, countenance.”

It is easy to superimpose our own language’s definition of poetry onto another’s. Because the Greek Empire “Hellenized” Judea, for instance, ancient analysts judged biblical poetry based on rules and conventions of Greek poetry’s use of meter and rhyme. It wasn’t until the Renaissance that the method of Hebrew poetry was appreciated for what it was. With the advent of the printing press and Christian interest in understanding the original language of their scriptures, it became apparent that the Hebrews valued *parallelism* (presenting a thought in a pair of statements) as a sort of meter, and that *rhyme* was less a priority than *assonance* (words chosen for their similarity of sound, which is broader than rhyme) and *alliteration* (words beginning with the same sound).

Notice Psalm 42:2: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.” The parallelism of this verse also happens to contain both assonance and rhyme:

*Ke’ayal ta’arog al-afikei-mayim*  
*ken nafshi ta’arog eleikha Elohim*

Additionally, the word translated “panteth” has an onomatopoeic function—i.e. sounding like the dry voice of one who is thirsty, as Edward George King pointed out in *Early Religious Poetry of the Hebrews*. “We have no word in English for this. But the English reader has a right to know that the poet applies this strong word to the cry of his soul!”

Obviously, some of the beauty of Hebrew poetry gets lost in translation, just as Shakespeare’s power is blunted when he is translated out of English. Meter, wordplay, rhyme, alliteration and assonance get lost.

Something more subtle gets lost in translation too—CONNOTATION (simply put, associations between words). Hebrew is particularly built around relationships between words that are largely obscured once any of those words are translated into another language.

“Nothing is more difficult to translate than a Hebrew psalm,” Herder wrote. “In Hebrew, a single word, easily uttered and agreeable in sound, expresses the whole sentiment. In ours 10 are often necessary; and though they express it with more logical distinctness, it is with less ease and eloquence.”

The *Anchor Bible*’s volume on the Psalms, written by Hebrew poetry expert Mitchell Dahood, calls

it “extremely difficult poetry” that is “subtle, full of nuances.” Dahood wrote, “Often its conciseness results in ambiguity, and in some cases the ambiguity seems willed.”

Anyone willing to put forth effort to understand the original Hebrew, however, will discover an array of deeper experiences. This doesn’t mean that studying Hebrew poetry in another language is a futile effort. As is the case with any kind of poetry, there are plenty of literary devices that DO translate.

When a poet uses comparisons like metaphor, simile or symbolism, these can translate. Also able to survive translation are devices like personification, paradox (contradictions used to make the same point), hyperbole (exaggeration for effect), anaphora (starting multiple phrases with the same word or phrase), apostrophe (addressing something that cannot reply), synecdoche (e.g. saying “sword” when the entire army is implied) and merism (stating two opposite extremes to show the totality of something—e.g. from Dan to Beersheba). Hebrew poetry’s “parallelism” usually translates too.

#### ISRAEL: LITERATE AND LITERARY

Dahood discussed the “highly sophisticated” nature of the psalms and concluded, “The poets’ consistency of metaphor and subtlety of wordplay bespeak a literary skill surprising in a people recently arrived from the desert and supposedly possessing only a rudimentary culture.” This is because it was certainly NOT a rudimentary culture.

Israel on the whole was a highly literate people; this is especially true of those in authority. Numbers 5:23 indicates the priests were to write in a scroll, and Deuteronomy 17:18 ordered future kings to pen their own copy of the law. This latter exercise would acquaint monarchs with not only the legal system of their kingdom but also its foundational literary culture.

“Such images and ideas, as even the first chapters of Genesis have preserved to us, are impossible for a savage and uncultivated people,” wrote Herder. “Here all is simple and divine, as if one of the Elohim had Himself instructed the genius of humanity.”

These were writers whose literary accomplishments even extended beyond the Bible. King Solomon, for instance, is said to have composed 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 5:12). The book of Proverbs is just over 900 verses, and not every verse is an individual proverb, meaning thousands of his proverbs have not survived in print.

We can extrapolate from this that there would have been secular poetry from the ancient Hebrews.

Scripture lends support to this as well. The “book of the Wars of the Lord” (Numbers 21:14) and the “book of Jashar” (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18) may indicate less-sacred writings.

The Hebrews heavily valued the written word.

Ancient Hebrew wisdom was concerned with being able to read, understand and even compose great enigmas, dark sayings, riddles and proverbs (Proverbs 1:1-6). The Hebrew word for “proverb” is *mashal*—sometimes translated as “parable”—meaning a comparison (a definition being reasonably similar to “metaphor”). Skill at making comparisons is one of the bedrock abilities of a poet. A “knack for seeing resemblances” is what Prof. Leland Ryken calls the “qualifying exam” for great poets.

The Hebrew Bible has no shortage of masters in this regard.

### MOSES: ‘HOMER’ OF THE HEBREWS

The biblical record attests to the outstanding linguistic ability of its authors. Moses, whom the Christian Bible says mastered Egyptian wisdom, was “mighty in words” (Acts 7:22). Though he used his apparent stammer to protest his divine commission at the burning bush, he certainly lacked no skill as a writer. Having penned the Pentateuch’s nearly 80,000 words, his impact on religion is still felt today.

Even in a moment of seemingly conventional dialog, when he said, “It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear” (Exodus 32:18), this triadic statement flows from his Hebrew lips in an entirely poetic way with wordplay, assonance and rhyme:

*ein kol anot g'vurah*  
*ve'ein kol anot khalushah*  
*kol anot anokhi shome'a*

In Exodus 15, the Hebrew lyrics of his song at the Red Sea are well suited for large groups of people to sing and include incredible assonance, occasional rhyme, and some alliteration and economy of language. To the latter point, the English phrase in verse 1, “for He is highly exalted” (or “triumphed gloriously” in the King James Version), is merely five Hebrew syllables: *ki-ga'oh ga'ah!*

Moses is also known for composing two other masterful poems—recorded in Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 90. Imagery and poetic techniques from both find their way into many other writings of the Hebrew Bible.

“To a young man, who would understand the psalms and prophets in their true spirit, I might give it, indeed, as a general rule, superseding all others; ‘Read Moses!

read the Mosaic history!’” Herder wrote. “A single word occurring in this poetry often gives occasion for the finest poetical development through entire chapters. What Homer is to the Greeks, that Moses is in his relation to the Hebrews.”

### ROYAL WRITERS

King David is another obvious literary standout. Through his whole life he valued and excelled at the poetic arts, taking them to stunning new heights.

As a young man, he was known for being “prudent in affairs” (1 Samuel 16:18), which the Hebrew indicates is *ADEPTNESS WITH WORDS*. It is clear he studied the literary masters that preceded him. Psalm 68 shows the influence of Moses’s writings as well as Deborah’s poem of Judges 5. Psalm 39 is full of language similar to the book of Job (also compare Psalm 62:12 with Job 33:14; 40:5).

By the end of his life, David was awarded the distinction of “sweet singer of Israel,” crediting God’s Spirit as being on his tongue (2 Samuel 23:1-2). The passage continues to record an incredibly vivid poem by King David.

Many of his compositions were created during times of great distress, even when on the run for his life (for more information, read “Psalms of the Fugitive” at [ArmstrongInstitute.org/959](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/959)). Crafting literary art while under such hardship reveals the value poetry had to the great Hebrew king.

The impact of his poetry on the world—from his contemporaries to our day, and from Shakespeare down to the common reader—is impossible to quantify. His biblical poetry is largely recorded in the book of Psalms, and much imagery from those works has found its way into many other languages and religions.

One of his more famous compositions is the dirge on the death of Saul and Jonathan, recorded in 2 Samuel 1. The refrain of that work, “How are the mighty fallen,” has become a well-known expression in the English-speaking world (“How the mighty have fallen”).

David’s son Solomon was also prolific and impactful. His 1,005 songs infer the creation of music AND lyrics—a couple of which are preserved in the book of Psalms; another is an epic composition that continues to bedazzle literary scholars: the Song of Songs.

Beyond that, Solomon’s proverbs—not musical compositions in the same sense—are some of the greatest examples of Hebrew poetry. The wisdom contained therein largely transcends translation. And despite the translation issues in some cases, *many* of them have become very “proverbial” in other languages.

The book of Proverbs stands out for being framed in parental admonition. This is evident from its opening

verses, its final chapter (framed as from a mother to a son), and also in the personification of wisdom as a woman in chapter 8. Herder wrote: “The relations of father and child constituted the primitive forms of government among men,” and the Hebrew proverbs are “peculiarly marked by a tone of paternal kindness and unaffected sincerity, of which scarcely any other people can furnish an example ....”

## POETIC PROPHETS

After literary giants like Moses, David and Solomon, the Bible is full of other linguistic geniuses. One of King Hezekiah’s songs is catalogued in Isaiah 38:9-20. Hezekiah was also responsible for adding several of Solomon’s proverbs to the canon (Proverbs 25:1).

But the semantic skill of the First Temple Period rests heavily on the prophets, which the Bible says were generally well skilled in the musical and poetic arts. According to *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*, the word for *prophecy* can mean “to pour forth words abundantly” or even “to sing.” This connection may be particularly true of the women employed in sacred offices: Of the four righteous prophetesses mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, two are noted for their musical abilities.

All these prophets were vividly trying to convey a certain “inevitability” in their message, and poetry is the most obvious packaging for this. Also, some of poetry’s innate ambiguity makes the prophecies open to multiple applications—i.e. the concept of prophetic “duality,” as Isaiah describes dual purposes for his writings (Isaiah 30:8).

Mitchell Dahood related an exchange he had with one of his professors at the University of Chicago who asked him what was the most difficult Semitic language. Dahood answered Arabic, but his professor “found biblical poetry, especially the prophets, the most difficult. The lack of case endings that would serve to show the relationship between words, the compact construct chains that could express innumerable reports between the construct and the genitive, the poetic vocabulary, and the highly elliptical character imposed by metrical considerations conspired to make biblical poetry the greatest challenge ....”

Hebrew poetry’s emphasis on prophecy is partly what makes it unique among ancient literature. “That this ‘energizing word,’ this outspeaking of God by the mouth of a prophet, gave to the poetry of the Hebrews a peculiar form, is manifest of itself,” Herder wrote. “Oracles of this kind have little or nothing to correspond to them in the poetry of other nations. Here nothing was invented for pastime.”

Ezekiel 33:32 shows that Ezekiel was revered as a talented literary artist, but his contemporaries wouldn’t act on his message. Ezekiel 21:5 shows that they viewed what he wrote as mere “pastime” or entertainment: “Then said I: ‘Ah Lord God! they say of me: Is he not a maker of parables?’”

Ezekiel tried to convey his messages with powerful comparisons to make it impactful, but the people just saw it as artistic—much like we can dismiss the gravity of a statement by saying its author was being “poetic.” At any rate, it is clear from Ezekiel’s common use of the word *mashal*, as well as the word *kinah* (another poetry term implying a lament or dirge), that he was aware his writing had an artistic, poetic style. Even though there is no word in biblical Hebrew for “poetry,” words do exist for these poetic genres, as well as the terms found in headers for the Psalms: *michtam*, *maschil*, *psalm*, *song*, etc.

Among the prophets, Isaiah stands out as a leading virtuoso of the poetic arts. His work has had a significant impact on other languages. The English language has over 60 common sayings that come from his book alone.

Some dub Isaiah the “Shakespeare of the Bible” and “prince of the prophets.” Biblical parlance and Jewish tradition suggest he actually was royalty—based on the way his pedigree is listed and the way palace officials interacted with him. His discussion of the musical and linguistic arts themselves bespeak a certain sophistication in his education.

Elaine James lauds his “rich lexicon of the natural world” and credits him with “the most diverse vocabulary of plants among the prophets.” He makes tremendous use of metaphors and wordplay. His favorite comparison from the natural world appears to be water, and he commonly employs metaphors related to pottery, as well as aspects of motherhood.

## TEXTS OF ‘THE TWELVE’

Other prophets such as “The Twelve”—sometimes referred to as “minor”—exhibited great poetic skill.

Habakkuk 3 is a displaced psalm, having three features of psalms without being included in the actual collection: It has a compositional header (verse 1), psalm-like musical instructions (verse 19), and three uses of *Selah* (verses 3, 9, 13), used elsewhere only in the Psalms.

Amos also stands out. “The language is rich and the literary features abundant in the book of Amos,” the *Anchor Bible* states. “In addition to the literary structures ... Amos uses a number of other features to formulate his message. The use of divine appellatives, the alternation between first and third person, and

between second and third person with reference to addresses, and the creation of sound patterns all aid in knitting together the larger structure .... Amos is fond of progressive numerical formulas, using them to structure at least three sections of the book ....”

Amos 1:3 provides an example of this: “For thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because they have threshed Gilead with sledges of iron.” This technique—used also in verses 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 6—clearly emphasizes the fourth item in the phrase and represents “the accumulative effect of evil,” as Mr. Flurry wrote in 1991. This is a technique found also in Proverbs; perhaps Amos was influenced by that technique (see Proverbs 30:18-19, 21-22, 29-31; 6:16-19).

Amos also makes fine use of a technique known as *chiasm*—a mirroring effect in the text that draws attention to the content in a number of ways. An obvious example of this is found in Amos 5:5 (here arranged in a way to make this clear):

But seek not *Beth-el*,  
Nor enter into *Gilgal*,  
And pass not to *Beer-sheba*;  
For *Gilgal* shall surely go into captivity,  
And *Beth-el* shall come to nought.

Joel, another powerful poet, seems to have been influenced by Amos (compare Joel 3:16 with Amos 1:2). Joel 2 is a masterpiece in terms of line-by-line imagery and overall organization, which conveys the driving forward momentum of a devastating army. “The poet exercises a stark economy in both his figurative language and his choice of vocabulary,” wrote Alter.

## ASTOUNDING ACROSTICS

Then there was one of the sons of the high priest Hilkiah—the Prophet Jeremiah, who wrote the largest biblical book in terms of word count. As our editor in chief has written about extensively, Jeremiah also penned some substantial lyrical compositions. These include the book of Lamentations (see 2 Chronicles 35:25) and two psalms that employ similar language and poetic techniques to Lamentations: Psalm 89 and Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 is the epic acrostic poem of the collection. This is a technique that doesn’t translate, since the poem is structured in the order of the Hebrew “aleph-bet”—each section commencing with a word that starts with the next letter in the sequence.

Jeremiah was clearly influenced by David, who is the only named author to employ the acrostic technique in the Psalms (Psalm 25, 34, 37, 145). The anonymous

Psalm 111 and 112 are also acrostic and share remarkable similarities with each other, implying they were to be experienced *together*. The only other acrostic poem in the Bible is the “valiant woman” poem of Proverbs 31.

Each one of David’s acrostic psalms is extraordinarily impressive in its organization—especially Psalm 37, which is able to employ an astonishingly chiasmic structure in *addition* to the acrostic.

Regarding Psalm 119, Charles Spurgeon, in *The Treasury of David*, wrote that “those who have studied this divine hymn and carefully noted each line of it are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning.”

Though epic in length, it is unlike the “epic” poems from a similar time period, which are more narrative and historical in content and easy to hold in the mind because of their singular plot. It is even unique among Hebrew poems, which tend to be shorter and more easily retained. “It is a kind of technical flexing,” Elaine James writes, “as the exhibition of formal mastery becomes the central energy of the poem.” She says this allows it to stay closely focused on “the celebration of *torah*.”

The book of Lamentations has the same organization. This highly organized composition creates irony by describing chaos in such an orderly way, and it portrays ugliness in the framework of verbal beauty. The organizational tactic is a particularly intriguing artistic decision. The content might demand the “lament” form found in many of the psalms, but instead we get this systematic acrostic approach. And one acrostic is not even enough to contain the calamity.

Four of the five chapters are written acrostically. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 contain one verse per Hebrew letter, while chapter 3 contains three verses per letter.

A slight variation in letter order occurs in chapters 2, 3, 4—creating a subtle upset to its own predictability (see our article “Does the Book of Lamentations Contain ‘Forgetful Errors’?” at *ArmstrongInstitute.org/865*). And chapter 5—though containing the same number of verses as Hebrew letters—abandons the acrostic entirely but employs frequent alliteration and even rhyme.

The number of verses in each chapter draw our attention to certain numerical observations—particularly as related to the number 7. Four chapters of 22 verses each, plus a chapter of 66 verses, makes for a

154-verse work—which is 77 plus 77, or 22 multiplied by 7. Chapter 2 uses the word “Zion” seven times; the entire book uses “Jerusalem” seven times. The names of God are used 49 times, or seven sevens. *Adonai* is used 14 times; *YHWH*, 32 times; *Elyon*, two times; *El*, one time). It is clear that this book was incredibly organized.

## READING THE FUTURE

So much of biblical Hebrew poetry puts our attention on the future and considers its own longevity within its stanzas.

King David wrote: “One generation shall laud Thy works to another, And shall DECLARE Thy mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4). The word for “declare,” *nagad*, has the connotation of making something conspicuous. Other psalms make similar pledges to preserve praise in writing for future generations (Psalm 71:17-18; 78:1-6; 79:13).

Psalm 78:6 specifically reads: “That the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born; Who should arise and TELL them to their children.” The Hebrew for “tell” is *safar*, which as a noun means “scribe” and is related to the word *book*. Hebrew poetry is acknowledging its need to be written, published and preserved.

Psalm 22:31-32 read: “A seed shall serve him; It shall be told [*safar*] of the Lord unto the next generation. They shall come and shall declare [*nagad*] His righteousness Unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done it.”

One of the most inspiring psalms in this regard is Psalm 102, which is classified as a “prayer.” First note how verse 18 contains a bit of a self-aware moment—believing God Himself to be reading this poet’s composition: “When He hath regarded [to LOOK AT] the *prayer* of the destitute, And hath not despised their prayer.”

This forward-looking psalm also mentions God’s remembrance enduring to all generations (verse 13). Later comes this electrifying statement: “This shall be WRITTEN for the *generation to come*; And a people which shall be created shall praise the Lord” (verse 19).

As Elaine James writes, this verse contains an “impulse toward the future, including the general openness ... that signals awareness of the possibility of its own reappropriation.” Here the psalmist is looking forward to the “appropriation” of this psalm to a “generation to come.”

Even beyond this one verse and this one psalm, the nature of Hebrew poetry has been incredibly impactful through the ages. There seems to be no end to studying its depth, and we certainly can exclaim the sentiment contained in the word *Hallelujah* that neither will its influence cease any time soon. ■

## FEEDBACK

IN RESPONSE TO

### “DAVID AND SOLOMON’S MONUMENTAL KINGDOM” EXHIBIT EDITION:

**Yesterday, I received your “David and Solomon’s Monumental Kingdom” exhibit edition. I would like to thank you for this well presented publication. Flipping through its pages, I found the materials inside to be very rich and most instructive.**

FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

Loved every moment of reading this issue.

ZEFAT, ISRAEL

Outstanding! A wonderful gift from you to all of us. Beautifully done. Thank you all. I am sure that everyone who has received this gift is as thrilled as I am!

VANCOUVER, CANADA

I just received my first *Let the Stones Speak* magazine (“David and Solomon’s Monumental Kingdom”) and was blown away at the depth of the historical and archaeological coverage. I would love to get hard copies of the previous years’ publications. I teach at a local Bible School and the material I discovered gives me a new dimension to my presentations.

ONTARIO, CANADA

IN RESPONSE TO

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Absolutely fascinating stuff. Thank you very much for your outstanding job and for keeping the audience informed.

You always do an outstanding job. I look forward to your YouTube channel and the magazine. Both are excellent. Thanks for the hard work.

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