

LET THE

ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The magazine of the

STONES SPEAK



MAY-JUNE 2024



A REVELATORY
MODEL

Archaeology is relevant to all people. When it is communicated effectively, it can be understood by almost anyone—and it can inspire everyone.

הארכיאולוגיה רלוונטית לכל אדם. כאשר היא מועברת בצורה יעילה, היא יכולה להיות מובנת כמעט לכל אחד - והיא יכולה להוות השראה לכולם.

LET THE STONES SPEAK

MAY-JUNE 2024 | VOL. 3, NO. 3 | CIRCULATION: 10,417

FROM THE EDITOR

Announcing an Exciting New Development! 1

A Revolutionary Carbon-Dating Study of Ancient Jerusalem 3

The Khirbet Qeiyafa Shrine Model: Insights Into Biblical Architecture 7

Let the Homes Speak! 15

INFOGRAPHIC
Four-Room Houses 18

An Interview With Prof. Michael Langlois 22

Face Value: Two New Coin Discoveries 26

Winged Wisdom 28

Remembering Iran's King Cyrus 33



FROM THE EDITOR | GERALD FLURRY

Announcing New Developments

A new venture will allow the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology to reach more of our friends in Israel.

I AM AMAZED BY THE REACH OF THIS MAGAZINE. I recently learned that we have subscribers scattered across 75 countries. We have readers in nearly every country in Europe, Southeast Asia and North America, including subscribers in far-flung nations such as Montenegro, Madagascar and Mauritius!

It inspires me to see people all over the world interested in biblical archaeology.

This shows how important Israel's archaeology is, not just to scientists, or to Jews and Christians, but to *humanity*. It also shows how important it is that Israel's biblical history be cherished, preserved and shared.

But of the many thousands of people we reach across the Earth, we have a special affection for one nation in particular: Israel.

One of the main goals of the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology and this magazine is to share Israel's biblical archaeology with the *people of Israel*. After all, this is *their* land and *their* history!

Archaeology is generally considered a scholarly and intellectual endeavor—and it is. But while archaeology is practiced by scientists and follows important

ng an Exciting lopment!

scientific and academic processes, it is not the *sole* domain of scholars. Archaeology is relevant to *all people*. When it is communicated effectively, it can be understood by almost anyone—and it can inspire everyone. We were taught this by our friend, the late Dr. Eilat Mazar. Eilat would often discuss how eager she was to share her archaeology—not just with her colleagues, the archaeologists, professors and scientists, but with the *general public*. Dr. Mazar believed her archaeological discoveries belonged to all Israelis. She told us many times that “regular Israelis” were fascinated by biblical archaeology and that this was the audience she really wanted to reach.

It was remarks like this by Dr. Mazar that inspired the establishment of our institute. Our staff does a lot of academic and scholarly work. We strive to keep abreast of the many archaeological excavations in Israel, we interview archaeologists and scholars, and we work regularly at Hebrew University, helping publish Dr. Mazar’s archaeology. Our team is constantly reading scientific reports and scholarly articles. Why? It isn’t merely because it interests us or because we want to grow as scholars. First and foremost, we do it because we want to *share* the archaeology with the largest audience possible, with the “regular people”—*especially* Israelis.

Our aim is similar to that of the Prophet Isaiah, who wrote: “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, Get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good

tidings to Jerusalem, Lift up thy voice with strength; Lift it up, be not afraid; Say unto the cities of Judah: ‘Behold your God!’” (Isaiah 40:9). All men, and especially the Jewish people, need the “good tidings” proclaimed in biblical archaeology.

One translation of Isaiah 40:9 reads, “O HERALD OF HAPPINESS TO JERUSALEM; raise it fearlessly and tell the towns of Judah, here is your God!” There is a lot of education, excitement and inspiration in Israel’s archaeology. Dr. Mazar was full of positive energy—a real dynamo. Where did all that enthusiasm come from? Most of it came from the history she would relentlessly study and excavate, the history of the Jewish people. Israel’s biblical history is just that powerful, inspiring and encouraging. This is the history we aim to share with the “regular people” in the “towns of Judah.”

There are a lot of brilliant scientists in this world. Unfortunately, too few have a genuine interest in *sharing* their brilliance and their work with the general public. Scholars can so easily turn inward and become so absorbed with their subject that they fail to share their work with the larger community. They can easily operate in an echo chamber where they share their knowledge and discoveries with only a handful of colleagues or maybe a small community of fellow experts. Dr. Mazar recognized this tendency. She believed that some of the common people of Israel had more vision than the elites. Many Jewish people know their Bibles, and love the history it records.



This is the history we aim to share with the ‘regular people’ in the ‘towns of Judah.’

When it comes to the goal of sharing biblical archaeology with the “regular people” in Israel we face an obvious and significant obstacle: Our friends in Israel speak Hebrew!

While many speak English, they are most comfortable speaking and reading Hebrew. We have long known that if we are going to reach the largest audience possible—if we are ever going to share this message with the “regular people” living in the “cities of Judah”—we would need a Hebrew-language version of *Let the Stones Speak*.

I AM THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THAT WE NOW HAVE IT! After 55 years of doing our archaeology work solely in English, we now have a Hebrew-language publication. It’s called לתת לאבנים לדבר, which is a close translation of “let the stones speak.”

This was an ambitious undertaking, and more challenging in practice than it was in theory. We are a relatively small organization, and English is our first language. While some of our staff know Hebrew, they aren’t fluent enough to translate articles on complex scientific topics. We overcame this challenge by having the magazine translated by a professional translation company.

The company is based in Israel, and all the translators are Israelis. Then, to safeguard the science, the Hebrew translations were edited by our friend, Hebrew University archaeologist Dr. Viviana Moscovich, who was a personal assistant to Dr. Mazar.

The desktop publishing was also done by Israelis, then edited by our brilliant graphic designers and artists. It takes between 10 to 12 people to produce the English-language *Let the Stones Speak*. The Hebrew-language magazine was produced by close to 20 people.

The timing of this development couldn’t be better. The first issue published in Hebrew is our special exhibit edition. This is the November 2023–February 2024 issue, which focused on the archaeology of the Kingdom of David and Solomon and was created to accompany our archaeological exhibit, now underway in Edmond, Oklahoma.

We printed 5,000 copies of this issue and had them sent to our office in Jerusalem. In July we will be ready to start dispatching these across Israel!

Now that we have *Let the Stones Speak* in Hebrew there’s only one thing left to do: We need to get word to the people of Israel. We are developing an advertising strategy, which will include both online ads and ads in newspapers. We are also exploring the possibility of sharing the magazine via other programs.

As far as we know, Israel doesn’t have a magazine devoted solely to its archaeology—which is one reason we believe לתת לאבנים לדבר has the potential to make a positive impact!

For now, the magazine will be mailed from Israel and will be available only to people living in Israel. If you have friends and family living in Israel who you think might enjoy this magazine in Hebrew, they can request the first issue by e-mailing requestIL@ArmstrongInstitute.org.

The first issue of *Let the Stones Speak* was published in January 2022 and was sent to 1,435 subscribers. This issue is being sent to 10,417 subscribers scattered all over the world! And now we have a Hebrew-language magazine! I don’t think any of us expected to be creating a Hebrew version *this soon*.

We are a small organization that tries to think big. In future issues we hope to share ideas we have for other ambitious projects. For now, we are thrilled to announce לתת לאבנים לדבר, an exciting new development that will allow us to share Israel’s biblical archaeology with the regular people living in the “towns of Judah.” ■

A Revolutionary Carbon-Dating Study of Ancient Jerusalem

A bat skull found in the City of David that helped determine the dating of a building

A compelling new study shows Jerusalem at the time of David and Solomon was more a bustling city than a quiet village.

BY BRENT NAGTEGAAL AND BRAD MACDONALD

THE JOB OF AN ARCHAEOLOGIST REVOLVES AROUND answering a short question. *When was it made?* This question is answered using several methods. The more precise the dating method, the more accurately the question can be answered.

For more than a century, the most common (and accurate) method of dating a discovery revolved around ancient pottery. Pottery styles change over time, which means certain styles can be associated with specific time periods. By dating a specific piece of pottery, archaeologists can often date the layer, including any other finds that might be found in it, to the same period as the pottery.

While assigning a date using pottery has proved effective, it isn't perfect. And it's not rare for the dates assigned to certain pottery types to be debated. For this reason, it is beneficial to have other dating methods. Over the last two decades, carbon-dating has emerged as an especially helpful tool.

In this article, we will consider a new landmark study of ancient Jerusalem. Thanks to new carbon-dating samples, we now have a more complete picture of Jerusalem's building program during the time of Israel's biblical kings.

The study, published on April 29 in the *PNAS* journal, is titled "Radiocarbon Chronology of Iron Age

Jerusalem Reveals Calibration Offsets and Architectural Developments." In the study, 103 carbon samples were taken from Iron Age layers (1200–586 B.C.E.) at several locations in ancient Jerusalem, also known as the City of David. What did the new study reveal?

A Well-Inhabited City

For more than two decades, the fiercest debate in archaeology has centered on the reliability of the history of the united monarchy of kings David and Solomon as documented in the Bible. In the exhibit edition of *Let the Stones Speak* (free upon request), we note the abundance of evidence from excavations across Israel supporting the biblical account. These include monumental buildings, discovered by the late Hebrew University archaeologist Dr. Eilat Mazar, on the ridge of ancient Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, there is an abnormal amount of debate about the dating of these buildings, with some archaeologists dating them to the ninth century B.C.E., roughly 100 years *after* King David. Although the recent radiocarbon study did not include samples of sites on top of the ridge, it did produce evidence indicating the widespread habitation of Jerusalem during the time of David and Solomon.

Of the 103 carbon samples (mainly seeds) from Jerusalem, 18 of them (almost 20 percent) fell within the early Iron Age (12th to 10th century B.C.E.). Only three of these samples were found in the context of early Iron Age pottery; the rest were found inside later building materials such as mortar. This “clearly indicates widespread occupation of yet undetermined character, often underestimated due to the limited architectural contexts attributed to this period,” stated the report.

Although the study cannot reveal the nature of Jerusalem’s construction in the 10th century, it does reveal that the city was densely inhabited at that time. According to Prof. Elisabetta Boaretto, one of the main authors, the number of samples from this period is statistically significant and cannot be ignored. “If there was just a very meager occupation, the hypothesis that ‘old seeds’ just ended up in later construction materials is not sustainable,” Boaretto told *Haaretz*. “You would not find that many dates spread all over the site—20 percent of the sample is a lot” (“Jerusalem in King David’s Time Was Much Larger Than Previously Thought, Researchers Say,” April 29).

Prof. Yuval Gadot, from Tel Aviv University, participated in the study and agreed with Professor Boaretto. (Gadot is also the codirector of the Givati Parking Lot excavation in the City of David and has years of experience with the site.) “It’s true,” he told *Haaretz*, “I can’t tell you what they built in this period, and who built it, but this material had to come from somewhere; someone was active there.”

Professor Gadot is not a biblical maximalist. In fact, on the topic of David, Solomon and Jerusalem, he has long been closer to the minimalist camp. However, his opinion is shifting, thanks to the evidence being furnished in his excavation and from this new study. “If my pendulum has to move somewhere, it now goes more in the direction of the city than the village because of these results,” he said. Kudos to Professor Gadot for following the science.

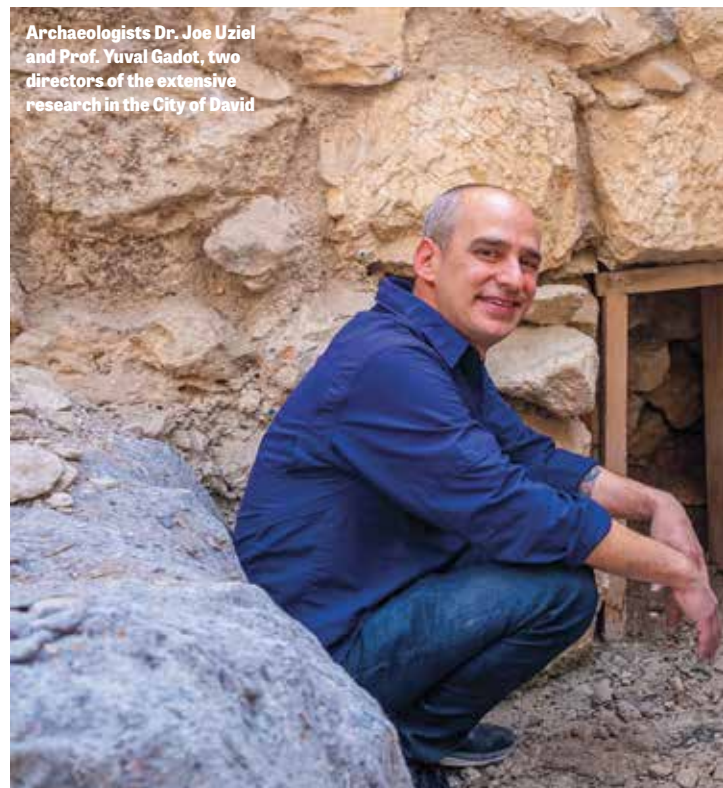
Ninth-Century Westward Expansion

Another debate revolves around the dating of Jerusalem’s westward expansion. A historical reconstruction based on the Bible places King David’s Jerusalem on the lower portion of the *eastern* hill (2 Samuel 5:7-9). King Solomon then expanded the city northward, onto an area known as the Ophel (1 Kings 3:1). Then, as attested to by earlier archaeological excavations, the much larger western hill was inhabited at least by the middle of the eighth century B.C.E. and was fortified with walls by the time of King Hezekiah in the late eighth century B.C.E.

But how soon after the 10th century did Jerusalem start expanding onto the western hill? Did it only begin during the reign of King Hezekiah, or was it earlier?

This new study provided an answer: Carbon-dating shows it occurred in the first half of the ninth century B.C.E., which is much earlier than initially thought.

A monumental building (Building 100) from the First Temple Period sits at the center of the Givati Parking Lot excavation. This structure gives us the earliest



insight into the westward expansion. According to the carbon-dating study, the building underwent several renovations throughout its 300 years of use. Carbon samples found underneath and in the first phase of the building’s construction show that it was constructed between 900 and 850 B.C.E.

Furthermore, there is evidence of widespread terracing of the bedrock, perhaps in preparation for the construction of Building 100. Put together, the authors now believe that the “city expanded westward in the ninth century B.C.E., and *possibly earlier*.” If it was earlier, as the authors allow, this would put the expansion as early as the end of the 10th century—very soon after the reign of King Solomon.

Consider this logically: If Jerusalem was expanding in the late 10th and early ninth century, then the top of

the ridge—the *original ancient core*—would have been inhabited *before* this time (any expansion would have first had to occur north, before moving west). This is a significant development in the discussion about Jerusalem. Until recently, the late Dr. Mazar stood virtually alone in her belief that the construction on top of the ridge occurred in the 10th century.

The biblical text doesn't explicitly reveal which biblical king was responsible for Jerusalem's early expansion. In the press release about the study, Professor Gadot



suggests the expansion likely occurred during the reign of King Jehoash, in the late ninth century.

However, looking at the dating of the study itself, King Asa of Judah, who reigned from 911 to 870 B.C.E., is perhaps a better candidate. The Bible records that his reign marked a period of stability and peace, both of which would be conducive to massive construction projects adjacent west of the core city.

Although Jerusalem is not mentioned specifically, the Bible does speak more generally to Asa's large-scale building activities: "And he built fortified cities in Judah; for the land was quiet, and he had no war in those years; because the Lord had given him rest. For he said unto Judah: 'Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars; the land is yet before us, because we have sought the Lord our God; we have

sought Him, and He hath given us rest on every side.' So they built and prospered" (2 Chronicles 14:5-6).

We know that Israel enjoyed 40 years of peace under Solomon, which allowed for the expansion of Jerusalem northward onto the Ophel. Perhaps the 30 years of peace during King Asa's reign, which began only four decades after Solomon, allowed for Jerusalem's westward expansion.

Regardless of which king is responsible, the fact that Jerusalem expanded in the ninth century proves that the core Jerusalem was a bustling, well-developed city *earlier* than previously thought.

The 'Old-House Effect' Is Real

When attempting to date structures in Jerusalem it is important to understand the "old-house effect," a phenomenon that has only been strengthened by the new study.

Typically, archaeologists date the construction of buildings by analyzing the material remains uncovered in the earliest floor of the structure. By dating the material remains on top of the floor and directly underneath it, a window of time is created identifying the date of construction. Most often, the material on top of the floor is sealed by destruction, thus giving the latest possible construction date and end-of-use for the structure.

Generally, this method of dating is accurate, but only if the building was in use for a few decades before it was destroyed. What if the building was in use for hundreds of years *before* it was destroyed? This is the pitfall of the old-house effect: A structure could have existed for centuries, but most finds will only relate to its destruction.

In Jerusalem, there are no destruction events between King David in the 10th century B.C.E. and the Prophet Jeremiah in the sixth century, save for the eighth-century earthquake (to be addressed later). Therefore, the archaeological remains appear to favor a later date for construction. Yet in reality, the structures were built much earlier. As such, the projects of the earlier builders (such as David and Solomon) are harder to delineate.

Building 100 is a perfect case study to prove that the "old-house effect" is real in Jerusalem. Those who have followed the Givati excavation are likely already familiar with some of the reported Iron Age finds. These include several crushed storage vessels that stored vanilla-laced wine (ArmstrongInstitute.org/722); the seal impression of Nathan-Melech, a royal official mentioned in the book of Kings (ArmstrongInstitute.org/154); as well as hundreds of ivory inlay fragments (ArmstrongInstitute.org/757). All of these discoveries date to the decades before the final destruction of the building. However, because of

the old-house effect, they do not represent the building's entire period of use.

Thanks to this groundbreaking radiocarbon study, we now have a much clearer understanding of this site.

First, we now know that Building 100 was first built in the early ninth century B.C.E. Then sometime during the middle of the eighth century it underwent a large renovation, which Professor Gadot and his colleagues posit was a result of the cataclysmic earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1. Gadot and colleagues were able to date the reconstruction following the earthquake by carbon dating a dead bat found in a recess in the building. A second renovation occurred between 680 and 670 B.C.E. when a second floor was added. Finally, the whole building was destroyed in 586 B.C.E.

“Remarkably, while our radiocarbon determinations demonstrate [an approximate] 300-year use of Building 100, the pottery found in association with the building belongs almost entirely to the end of the seventh to the early sixth centuries B.C.E., in the terminal Iron Age,” the authors write in the study.

Archaeologists must take the “old-house effect” into account when reconstructing Jerusalem’s history based on the archaeological remains. Doing so shows that many buildings were constructed much earlier than we might otherwise accept.

Added to that, Jerusalem’s old-house problem is another indication of the stability Jerusalem experienced through the period of the biblical kings. As the authors note, “The lengthy period of use of Building 100, determined from our radiocarbon dates, may be emblematic of the city’s long-term economic flourishing and relative political stability up until the Babylonian invasion at the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. The city’s continuous occupation indicates a time of demographic growth while recurring conflicts with regional empires negatively affected settlements elsewhere in the region.” In other words, Jerusalem survived unscathed from the time of David for a period of almost 400 years, whereas other cities in the region were often conquered and reconquered.

The Bible credits God for this protection in numerous passages. The greatest example of this occurred when the mighty Assyrian Empire conquered all the cities of Judah except Jerusalem during the reign of King Hezekiah. As the Prophet Isaiah recorded at the time, God promised: “I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David’s sake” (Isaiah 37:35).

Calibrating Science With the Bible

On the eastern side of the City of David ridge, scientists took radiocarbon samples from the area just above the Gihon Spring (Area U). Here, 11 separate floors have been found, all built on top of each other. These floors

have been dated from the eighth century to the sixth century B.C.E. These two centuries fall inside what is known in the carbon-dating world as the Hallstatt Plateau, a period in which the ratio of carbon 14 to carbon 12 in the atmosphere is known to be inconsistent. This makes it extremely hard to rely on (and trust) carbon dates in this window as a precise dating tool.

To ensure accurate results, carbon dates in this period especially must first be calibrated using an object or layer of known date. Without calibration, carbon dating cannot stand alone as a reliable dating method.

Most of the time, tree rings (which typically grow at a rate of one ring per year) are used to calibrate the carbon dating curve. For example, a carbon sample taken from a tree ring from 3,000 years ago, might return a date 2,900 years ago. In which case, the tree ring date is considered true (the object of known date) and all other carbon dates that return a value of 2,900 years ago will be calibrated back 100 years.

However, the problem with this is that there are often differences between the amount of carbon 14 in the atmosphere in one location of the globe compared to the amount of carbon 14 in the atmosphere at the location of the trees used to calibrate the curve. In this case, calibrating the carbon dates *locally* allows for a more precise result.

This is exactly what happened in Area U of the City of David.

The local events used to calibrate the carbon dates are BIBLICAL EVENTS. That’s right: Two biblical events have been so well documented and proved, even by other historical sources and methods, that they are considered more reliable than tree rings.

In the case of Area U, organic samples were taken from the 11 floors along with pottery. The earliest of these floors is related to the large earthquake from the time of Amos and is known to many other archaeological sites throughout Israel. The earthquake dates to approximately 760 B.C.E., and thus the carbon samples taken from this layer were calibrated to this biblical event.

The destruction of the latest floor, dated by its pottery in connection to the biblical text and Babylonian chronicle, dates to around 586 B.C.E. The carbon dates found in that destruction were calibrated to that biblical event.

THIS IS INCREDIBLE! These two events, documented in the biblical text more than 2,500 years ago, are considered so reliable (down to the specific year) they were used to synthesize the scientific data. In this case, the curve was calibrated by the Bible! Those biblical events were also corroborated by previous finds from other empires, providing further evidence for the reliability of Scripture. (As an aside,



The Khirbet Qeiyafa Shrine Model: Insights Into Biblical Architecture

What a 3,000-year-old artifact reveals
about royal Solomonic construction

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

THE BIBLE CONTAINS A REMARKABLE AMOUNT OF detail relating to the construction of Solomon's temple, palace and administrative buildings. Entire chapters highlight various measurements and layouts of these structures built some 3,000 years ago.

Yet for all the detail documented in the biblical text, there is a lot of confusion and debate about the nature and appearance of these structures. Consider, for example, the various depictions of the first temple, built by King Solomon. No depiction of the temple is ever the same, even though all artists use the same text to develop their reconstruction.

Part of the problem is the many peculiar technical terms used to describe these buildings. Bible translations are at odds on the correct way to render these long-obsolete words. In some instances, certain misunderstandings of the text have even led translators and commentators to assume *error*, and to retroactively "fix" the biblical text.

Now comes the “*that all changed when ...*” cliché. But as cliché as it might sound, it’s true. As Prof. Yosef Garfinkel and Dr. Madeleine Mumcuoglu write in the foreword to their 2016 book *Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries*: “From time to time in archaeological research, a single find is able to illuminate and clarify an entire world. We have had this privilege with the discovery of such a find in our excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa.”

“Each generation attempts to understand the temple and Solomon’s palace according to the information available at the time,” they write. “Our great advantage stems from the fact that we have new and revolutionary data. We are now able to clarify the biblical terms ... in the depiction of Solomon’s palace and the temple.”

Treasure of Stone

One of the most revolutionary and important sites in the debate about the historicity of the biblical King David is Khirbet Qeiyafa. Situated in the Shephelah (Judean Lowlands), overlooking the Valley of Elah (the place of David’s battle with Goliath), Khirbet Qeiyafa first attracted the attention of Hebrew University professor Yosef Garfinkel and Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologist Saar Ganor almost 20 years ago.

In 2007, they initiated a seven-year archaeological excavation. It is hard to overstate the significance of what they have found at Khirbet Qeiyafa and its importance to biblical archaeology: Garfinkel and Ganor discovered a single-period Judean city that was carbon-dated to around 1020–980 B.C.E.—the time period of King David.

Much has been published on Khirbet Qeiyafa and its broader implications on the discussion about the Davidic kingdom (see *ArmstrongInstitute.org/1008* for an overview). Among the many individual discoveries at the site, arguably the most intriguing was unearthed in 2011: a strange box-like, finely carved stone “shrine model.”

The item was found within Room G of Building C10, which is situated near the gate at the southern end of the city. The model, which measures 21 centimeters by 26 centimeters by 35 centimeters, features an open interior, evidently having originally held some item of

One of the most revolutionary and important sites in the debate about the historicity of the biblical King David is Khirbet Qeiyafa.

The triglyph is a well-known feature of classical Greek ‘Doric’ architecture, the earliest examples of which emerged in the mid-first millennium B.C.E.

significance in antiquity. The model’s key feature, however, is its ornate, decorative facade. It very obviously contains a number of sophisticated and intriguing architectural elements.

Most interestingly, however, these stylistic elements are similar to some of the architectural design features of Solomon’s temple and palace documented in detail in the Bible.

3,000-Year-Old Triglyphs

Carved into the ceiling architrave of the stone box is a row of seven squarish protrusions, each divided into three lines (only the middle four are fully preserved). “It is clear that ... these protrusions, although they were made of stone, were meant to imitate [protruding] wood [beams],” write Professor Garfinkel and Dr. Mumcuoglu.

These protrusions are very clearly *triglyphs*, a known and prominent architectural feature identified by triple-embossed frieze protrusions across the architrave of monumental (often pillared) buildings.

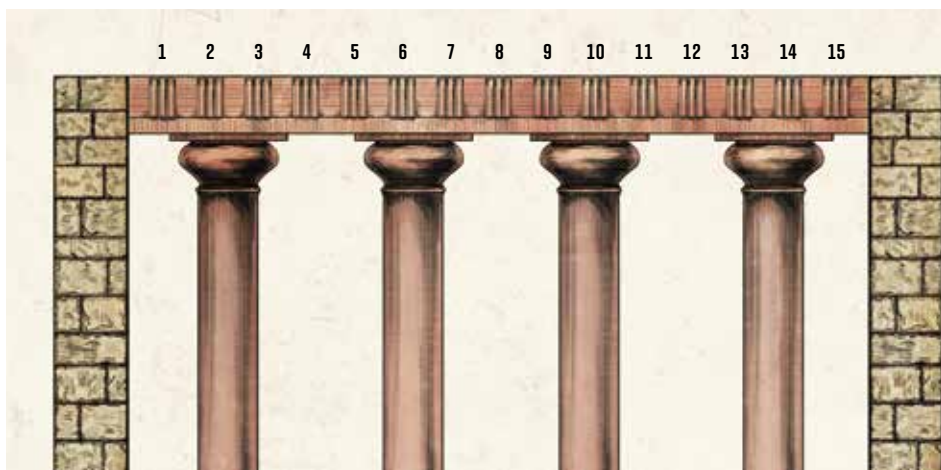
The triglyph is a well-known feature of classical Greek “Doric” architecture, the earliest examples of which emerged in the mid-first millennium B.C.E. It was a feature later used by the Romans and others, and remains a prominent design feature to the present day. “The earliest stone triglyph that we have is dated to circa 600 B.C.E., and there is no direct evidence for earlier examples in other materials except in the temples at Thermon and Calydon, where terracotta metopes were found dated by their style to circa 640 B.C.E.,” M. L. Bowen wrote in 1950, speculating that the design may have originated in Minoan Crete and entered Greece from the south, becoming an established architectural tradition on the mainland (“Some Observations on the Origin of Triglyphs,” *Annual of the British School at Athens*, Vol. 45).

Conversely, early 20th-century expert architect Leicester B. Holland believed that this supposed intrinsically Greek architecture “cannot be considered Minoan in origin, it must have been brought into Greece by the Dorians from the north” (“The Origin of the Doric Entablature,” *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 21, 1917). “The known fixity of form of the Doric entablature in stone from the seventh century B.C.E. for at least four centuries [onward] indicates, therefore, that a period at least equal in length,



Detail of triglyphs on the Parthenon

In their publication, Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu conclude that the House of the Forest of Lebanon does contain four rows of pillars—but that the 15 and 45 do not refer to pillars at all. Rather, these numbers refer to the roof beams sitting atop the pillars.



during which this form was developed structurally and made classic in some other material, must have elapsed before this date ... the germs of it [this design feature] at least must have been brought down from the north by the [Dorian] invaders.”

Holland’s postulations on an emergence of this design some four centuries earlier, around the turn of the millennium, could be considered justified. But who could have guessed that this earliest example of such architecture would come, *not* from southern Crete, nor mainland Greece, nor the northern Dorian Balkans, but from the Near East—from *Israel*?

“The triglyph decoration in the temple model from Khirbet Qeiyafa predates the Greek temples several centuries; for example, it predates the Acropolis temples of Athens by about 500 years,” Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu continue. “Our new find revolutionizes the understanding of the development of public construction in biblical times and attests that it began as early as the late 11th to early 10th centuries B.C.E. It also shows that architectural phenomena that developed in the *East* migrated and influenced Greek Classical architecture. Various scholars have pointed out the strong influences of the ancient Near East on elements of the culture of

Classical Athens; we can now add triglyphs as one of these elements.”

That quote is packed with some extraordinary observations, implying that classical Greek and Roman architecture—which humanity has admired for centuries—was influenced by *Israelite* architecture!

That’s not all. The discovery of the use of triglyphs in Judah some 3,000 years ago proved a eureka moment for Professor Garfinkel and Dr. Mumcuoglu in their study of the biblical text and what it records about King Solomon’s building projects.

Triglyphs in the Bible

1 Kings 7:2-3 in the King James Version (KJV) read: “He [Solomon] built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof was an hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon *four rows of cedar pillars*, with cedar beams upon the pillars. And it was covered with cedar above upon the beams, that lay on *forty five pillars, fifteen in a row.*”

This is a confusing passage. How can you have *four* rows of 15 cedar pillars totaling 45 pillars? Four rows of 15 pillars makes 60, not 45. And 45 pillars, 15 in a row, would mean *three* rows, not four.

The exasperation of Bible commentaries in understanding this passage is palpable. “The utter uncertainty as to the number and position of the four rows of pillars is sufficient in itself to render it quite impossible to draw any plan of the building,” concludes the *Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (1866). The *Pulpit Commentary* (1899) concurs: “How these [pillars] were disposed of, or what was their number, it is impossible to say ... it is impossible to form a correct idea of the building.”

There is so much confusion, some Bible translations have gone so far as to *change* the figures given in the text. Both the Greek Septuagint and Revised Standard Version, for example, change the “four rows” to read “three” in order to harmonize with the number 45; an early Arabic translation (unnamed, but mentioned by the *Pulpit Commentary*) changes the total of 45 to 60 in order to harmonize with the four rows of 15.

In their publication, Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu conclude that the House of the Forest of Lebanon *does* contain four rows of pillars—but that the 15 and 45 do not refer to pillars at all. Rather, these numbers refer to the roof beams sitting atop the pillars. They believe this passage actually refers to 15 sets of beams in groups of three, thus totaling precisely 45 ceiling beams atop the pillars of the structure.

“Based on the Khirbet Qeiyafa stone model, which presents roof beams organized in groups of three like the triglyphs of Classical architecture, we understand the [Hebrew] *slaot* as roof beams organized in groups of three. Our new interpretation explains the mathematical formula ‘45, 15 in each row.’ These numbers relate not to the columns, as believed by most biblical scholars, but to the roof beams.” Thus, the last half of verse 3 is better translated, “the beams that lay on the pillars: 45, 15 in a row.”

The authors cite the biblical description of Ezekiel’s temple as additional support. “The enigma of the ‘ribs’ [*slaot*] ... may perhaps be resolved by comparing ... the temple description in Ezekiel 40-43, which includes numerous technical terms, the original meaning of many of which has been lost over time. According to the description, there are 30 groups of three ‘ribs’ around the building (Ezekiel 41:6) ...

“The descriptions of the roof in Ezekiel’s temple and Solomon’s palace share the same terminology (‘ribs’/ צלעות [*slaot*]) and the same mathematics (groups of three). Based upon the stone building model from Khirbet Qeiyafa and the description of Solomon’s ‘house of Lebanon,’ it seems to us that Ezekiel described roof beams organized in a triglyph-like arrangement. This would create 30 groups of roof beams with three individual planks in each, yielding 90 planks altogether” (“Triglyphs and Recessed Doorframes on a Building Model From Khirbet Qeiyafa: New Light on Two Technical Terms in the Biblical Descriptions of Solomon’s Palace and Temple,” *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 63, 2013).

Recessed Frames

The most prominent feature of the stone shrine model is the multirecessed doorframe. Recessed doorframes are found commonly in the ancient world, with known parallels going back as far as the Early Bronze Age. Like the triglyph, they are also a feature of grand architecture up to the present day. Multirecessed doorframes are a marker of prestige—the greater the number of recessed frames, the more prestigious the room. (This is explained in detail in Mumcuoglu and Garfinkel’s 2018 book, *Crossing the Threshold: Architecture, Iconography and the Sacred Entrance*.)

The same concept is related in the biblical text—and again, couched in otherwise-unusual and debated

CLAY SHRINE MODEL

THE STONE MODEL WAS NOT THE only “shrine” item found at Khirbet Qeiyafa. Another, much more crudely formed, clay model was also found in Building C10, the pieces of which were located in two different rooms entirely, having been intentionally smashed in antiquity.

This model, measuring 10 centimeters by 11 centimeters by 15 centimeters, bears some related, yet also very different, motifs. The clay

pottery model appears to also depict triglyphs along its ceiling, albeit much more rudimentary and along two tiers. The entrance of this model is framed by twin pillars. Along the top of the model are the fragmentary remains of birds’ feet, belonging to three once prominently displayed birds along the top of the model. At the bottom, adjoining the pillars, are two crouched lion figurines (only the one on the right is fully intact). The display of two lions together

with pillars is especially similar to a Late Bronze Age Canaanite temple at Hazor, excavated by Prof. Yigael Yadin. This temple entrance featured twin pillars fronted by large basalt lion statues.

Prof. Yosef Garfinkel and Dr. Madeleine Mumcuoglu contrast and summarize these two Khirbet Qeiyafa shrine models: “The two models ... form a particularly interesting combination. The architectural decoration of the pottery model

Recessed doorframes are found commonly in the ancient world, with known parallels going back as far as the Early Bronze Age.

language. 1 Kings 6:31, for example, describes the doorway into the temple's Holy of Holies. "And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive tree: the lintel and side posts were a fifth part of the wall" (KJV). The last three words are in italics, meaning they were not in the original Hebrew but were added by translators in an attempt to make sense of the phrase "a fifth part."

Verse 33 describes the outer, main entrance to the temple hall: "So also made he for the door of the temple posts of olive tree, a fourth part of the wall" (KJV). Again, the verse ends with the translators' attempt to make sense of "a fourth part."

The division of the doorway into fifths and fourths becomes clear in the context of recessed doorframes. Evidently, the main doorway entrance to Solomon's temple consisted of a quadruple-recessed doorframe; the doorway into the holiest place, or Holy of Holies, a quintuple-recessed doorframe. "The new Khirbet Qeiyafa stone model, coupled with our awareness that recessed doorframes were widespread in temple architecture, gives rise to the interpretation that the Solomonic temple doors were decorated with quadruple- and quintuple-recessed doorframes," write Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu (*ibid*).



recalls Late Bronze Age Canaanite temples, while the stone model reflects elaborate structures from the Iron Age. Thus, Khirbet Qeiyafa preserves components predating its period together with elements that were to become typical of the period that followed" (*Solomon's Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries*). ■



The same is described of Herod's temple (the second temple). The second-century C.E. Mishnah describes a quintuple-recessed architrave framing the temple entrance (Middoth 3:7).

Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu also point out the triple-recessed frames of the doors and windows on Solomon's palace—again obscurely translated as follows: "And there were beams in three rows; and light was over against light in three ranks. And all the doors with their posts were square in the frame; and light was over against light in three ranks" (1 Kings 7:4-5). The New Living Translation puts it slightly better: "All the doorways and doorposts had rectangular frames and were arranged in sets of three, facing each other" (verse 5).

Thus we see the gradual increase in doorway-recessions, emphasizing the importance of the structure: triple-recessed doors for Solomon's palace, a quadruple-recessed entrance to the temple, and a quintuple-recessed entrance to the Holy of Holies.

Door Dimensions

Related to the stone model's doorframes are the overall dimensions of the door opening itself. They are exact in proportion. The stone model doorway is precisely twice as high as it is wide (20 centimeters by 10 centimeters).

This too is significant. Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu note, "While this may be a coincidence, it is possible that it reflects an architectural concept of entrances to temples and palaces in the ancient Near East" (*ibid*).

There is no obvious scripture relating the height of Solomon's temple door in relation to its width. Still, a

2-to-1 ratio is referenced of the porch at the entrance to Solomon's temple: "And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof ... and ten cubits was the breadth thereof before the house" (1 Kings 6:3).

There *is*, however, the same proportional parallel described of the door of Herod's temple. The Mishnah states of the second temple: "The doorway of the porch was forty cubits high and its breadth was twenty cubits"—the same 2-to-1 ratio (Middoth 3:7). Given the deliberate copying of various design elements of Solomon's temple in Herod's temple, it is only logical that the doors had the same proportion in Solomon's.

Seeing Red

One final feature of note: The shrine model, while largely a bare stone surface now, does have traces of having been decorated in some form of iron oxide-derived red paint.

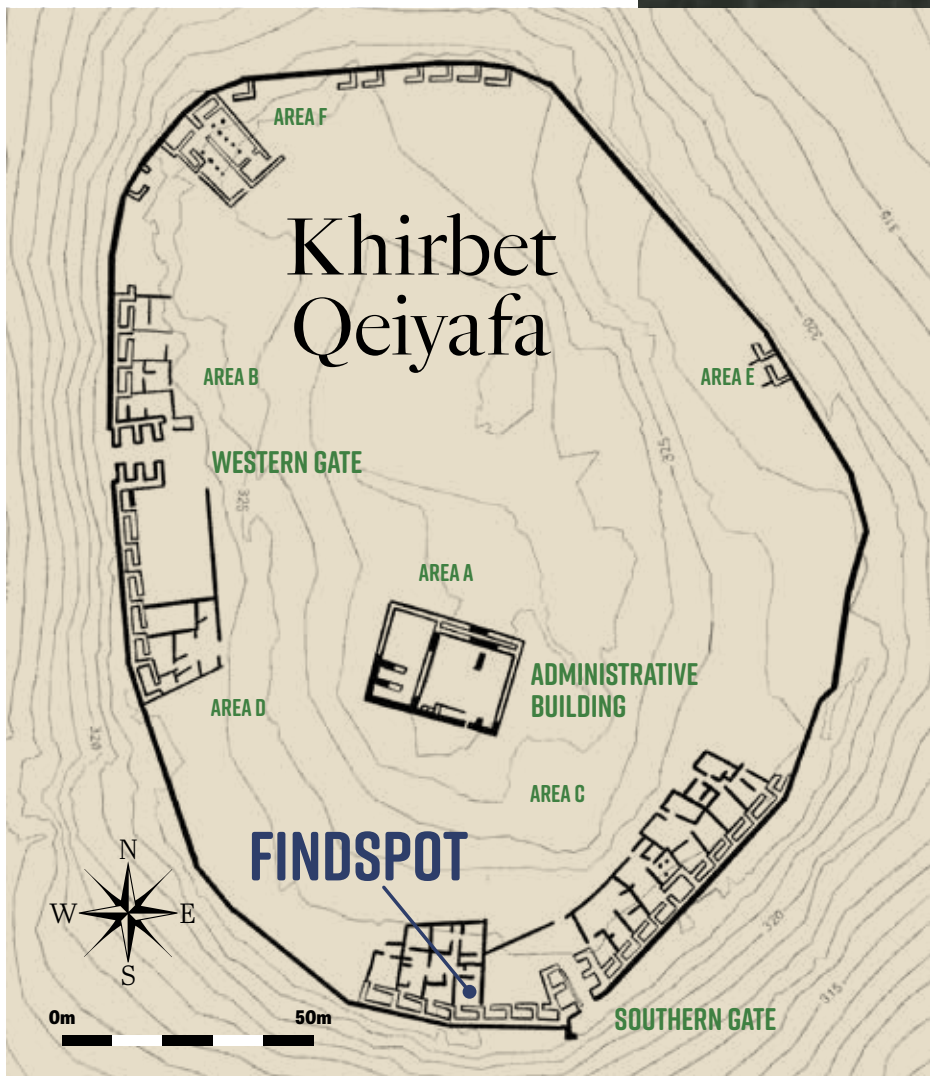
"It seems to have been a common practice in biblical times to paint significant buildings in a striking color, to contrast them with other buildings in the city," write Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu in *Solomon's Temple and Palace: New Archaeology Discoveries*.

They point to the example in Jeremiah 22:14 of King Jehoiakim's palace, with "spacious chambers ... windows ... ceiled with cedar, and *painted with vermilion*," adding that the Hebrew word "*sheshar*, translated as vermilion, is mentioned only once in the Bible and its meaning is unclear, but it is usually interpreted as a shade of red."

For What Purpose?

The Khirbet Qeiyafa shrine model is fascinating for several reasons, including its remarkable and unique design features. The most confounding factor, however, relates to its use: *What was the purpose of this stone model?*

We can't be sure. A number of such "shrine models"—otherwise known as "temple models" or "architectural models"—are known from the Bronze and Iron Ages, including examples from sites such as Tell el-Far'ah North (eighth century B.C.E.), Tel Rehov (ninth century B.C.E.), Hazor (Late Bronze Age) and Ashkelon (Middle Bronze Age). There are also several additional unprovenanced

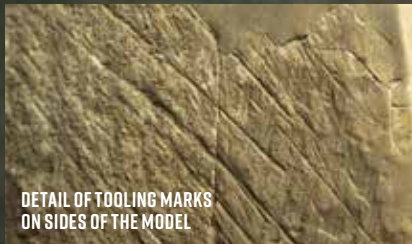


examples. There is even another shrine model found at Khirbet Qeiyafa, in the same building (see sidebar, page 14). All of these examples, however, are much cruder in design, and all are molded out of clay.

This Khirbet Qeiyafa model "is unique because to date no other such object made of stone has been found in the land of Israel. Moreover, the design of its facade is not known from any other temple model" (ibid).

It is apparent from the other examples that these models held some sort of religious significance. Their design resembles that of temples, and in some cases, they apparently contained a metal figurine of a deity or some other kind of item of worship. There is a depression on the floor of the Khirbet Qeiyafa stone model, where some sort of object was likely placed. What was it? Was it a figurine? Or some other item of religious significance? We can't be sure.

Various ideas have been proposed. Some have compared the shrine model concept to that of the



DETAIL OF TOOLING MARKS ON SIDES OF THE MODEL



DETAIL OF DOOR ATTACHMENTS

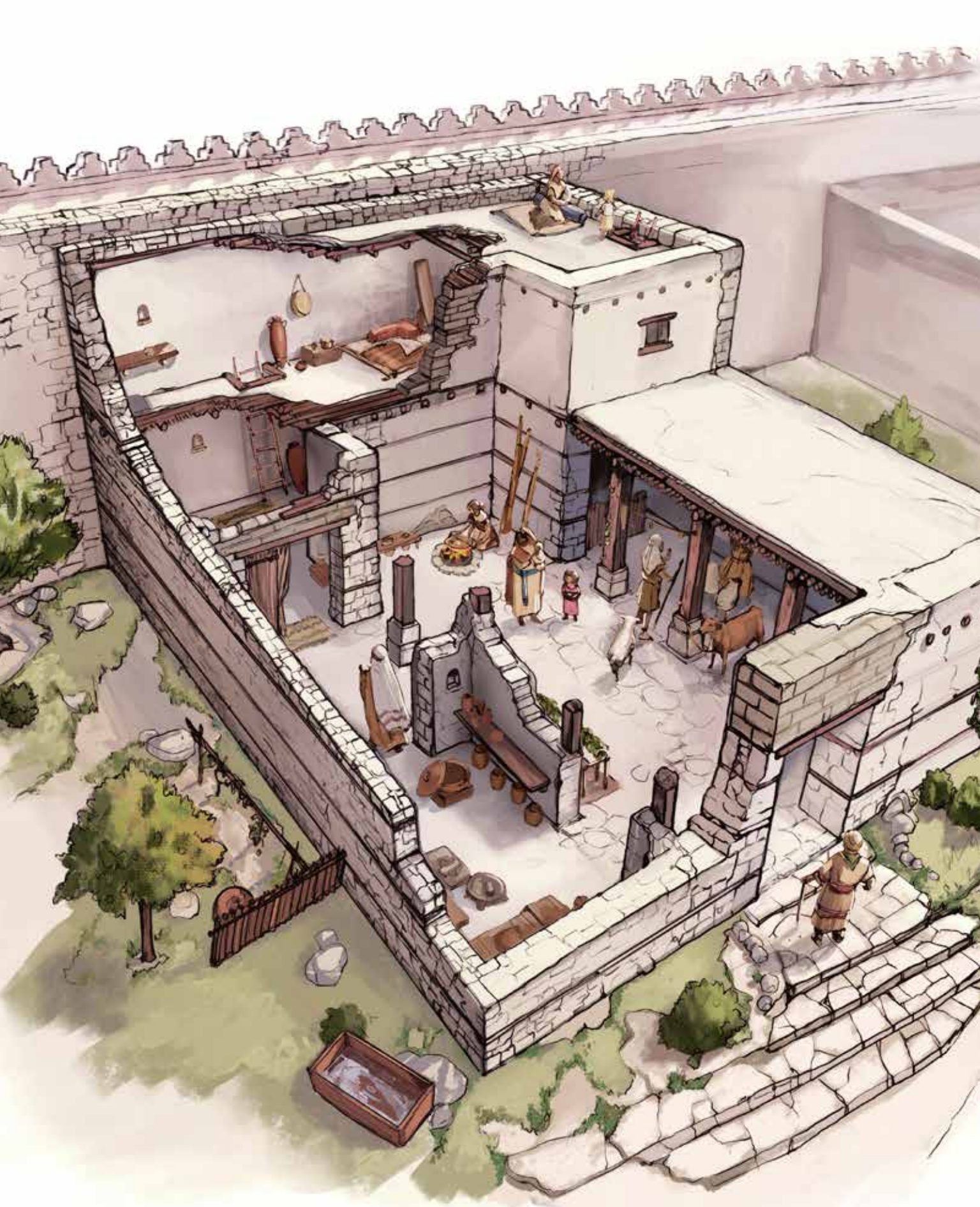
- 1 FRIEZE
- 2 ARCHITRAVE
- 3 METOPE
- 4 TRIGLYPH
- 5 ENTABLATURE
- 6 RED PAINT
- 7 DOOR ATTACHMENT
- 8 MOUNTING HOLES
- 9 FLOOR DEPRESSION FOR OBJECT
- 10 PORCH



mezuzah—the miniature containers affixed to the doorways of religious Jewish homes, containing passages of sacred Scripture. The back of the stone shrine model contains two holes, perhaps indicating that the box was intended for hanging against a wall.

Similar to the concept of the *mezuzah* in Judaism are the tefillin (phylactery) boxes, also containing excerpts of Scripture, and on a much grander scale the “arks,” such as those in synagogues, containing the Torah scroll itself. Professor Garfinkel and Dr. Mumcuoglu identify the shrine model as a form of “ark” (Hebrew *aron*, meaning “chest,” also the term used for the ark of the covenant), an item intended to carry something of religious significance.

Although the *why* of the shrine models eludes us—for now—the *what* remains extremely informative. From a time period 3,000 years ago (contemporary with David, Solomon and the construction of the temple and palatial complexes) and from a proximate geographical region (just a day’s walk from Jerusalem), we have a window into what were evidently recognized and utilized architectural features of special prominence. Architectural elements such as the triglyphs, which were used centuries earlier than previously realized, give us a tangible glimpse into what parts of Solomon’s temple and palace would have looked like. And these architectural elements continue to be used to this very day—3,000 years later. ■





Let the HOMES SPEAK!

Analyzing the blueprint of the quintessential Israelite home reveals so much about this crucial kingdom. **BY SAMUEL MCKOY**

DESIGNING A HOME IN IRON AGE ISRAEL WOULD have been much easier than it is today. While the sizes of homes varied and construction materials differed, Israelite homes generally followed one standard layout.

Understanding the quintessential Iron Age Israelite home can not only give us a better understanding of biblical stories and the ancient setting, but also confirm some important details of the Hebrew Bible, including the territorial boundaries of the united kingdom under kings David and Solomon.

Archaeologists generally refer to the classic Israelite home as a “four-room house.” Several of these homes have been excavated across Israel. According to Prof. James McLellan, the four-room home “may be the most studied structure within the Southern Levant” (“Formation of Identity Through Material Canonisation in Iron I Israel”).

There is clear evidence identifying when these homes became prevalent. “Today we can safely date the beginning of this type to the 12th century B.C.E.,” wrote Prof. Yigal Shiloh (“The Casemate Wall, the Four-Room House, and Early Planning in the Israelite City”). Archaeology reveals the four-room style remaining in use till Judah’s destruction in 586 B.C.E.

McLellan wrote that the four-room house became “canonized” into Israelite society, meaning this design was so ubiquitous that it became an essential part of Israelite culture. “Such a feature holds a special, unalterable character in the same way that canonical books cannot be removed, replaced or edited.” Prof. Avraham Faust wrote that the four-room house was “used by rich and poor, in cities and in villages and farmsteads, and even for public buildings and tombs” (*Contextualizing Jewish Temples*).

These structures are clearly a key feature of ancient Israel, which means they provide unique insight into its national identity, particularly during the period from the development of the monarchy through to the Babylonian destruction. And they give insight into Israel’s most captivating period: the kingdom of David and Solomon.

The Basic Layout

According to Professor Shiloh, “The principal feature of the four-room house and its subtypes is a back room the width of the building, with three long rooms stemming forward from it” (“The Four-Room House: Its Situation and Function in the Israelite City”). Not all of these “rooms” were fully enclosed, however. The front middle room often functioned as a type of courtyard, or gathering space. The two rooms on either side were used for storage or livestock care, and were usually separated by pillars, curtains, or segments of walls. The broad room in the back was generally fully enclosed, and this was where the family members slept. These broad rooms were sometimes two stories, with the second story being accessible by a ladder or stairs.

“The Iron I four-room houses discovered throughout the hill country typically measured 10 to 12 meters long (33 to 40 feet) and 8 to 10 meters (26 to 33 feet) wide,” Prof. Douglas R. Clark wrote. “The broad room extending across the back end of the building may have been 2 meters (6.6 feet) wide ...” (“The Human Investment in

Constructing a ‘Four-Room’ House”). Without subtracting the width of the walls of these homes, they would be about 80 to 120 square meters, or 850 to 1,300 square feet.

Thanks to archaeological excavation, we know these four-room homes were built as both stand-alone units and in clusters with shared walls. In some cases, they were built to form a belt of broad rooms, producing part of a settlement’s casemate walls. (For more on casemate walls, see ArmstrongInstitute.org/957.)

While the layout generally was the same, in some cases, the four basic rooms were subdivided into distinct spaces and used for different purposes.

There are dozens of mentions in the Bible of Israelite homes. Though they are not described in tremendous detail, the text provides enough detail to allow corroboration between the biblical description and archaeology.

For example, archaeologists have concluded, based on material remains, that Israelite homes had flat roofs. In Jeremiah 32:29, God condemns the houses “upon whose roofs they have offered unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke Me” (see also Jeremiah 19:13). 2 Samuel 11:2 indicates that King David spotted Bathsheba bathing on a rooftop. Both activities from these biblical examples would require flat, sturdy roofs.

We know too that many four-room houses were at least partially two stories. The Bible has many indications of two-story homes with an upper chamber. 2 Kings 1:2 records, “And Ahaziah fell down through the lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria” The Hebrew word for upper chamber is *aliya* (עליה) and can be translated as loft, parlor or room on the roof. 2 Kings 4 records the Shunammite woman building a living space for the Prophet Elisha, and the same word for chamber (*aliya* or עליה) is used. In verse 21, it says that the Shunammite woman “went up” to lay her son on Elisha’s bed.

The Bible also indicates that timber was used alongside stone in the construction of the roofs and ceilings of ancient homes. Jeremiah 22:14 condemns the man who says, “‘I will build me a wide house And spacious chambers’, And cutteth him out windows, And it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.” This too is confirmed by archaeology. Signs of wooden rafters and pillars have been discovered at Tel Qasile, Tel Batash, Lachish and Tel Harasim (Amihai Mazar, “The Iron Age Dwellings at Tel Qasile”).

Construction Materials

Building a home is never an *easy* task. In Iron Age Israel, it would have been far more labor intensive than it is today. Floors in Israelite homes were often made of rammed earth or flagstone. At the Iron Age site of Tel Umayri, the earthen floor was mixed with clay and ash,

making the floor harder and smoother.

Flagstone floors required builders to source large quantities of flat stones. Several stones from a floor at Umayri probably had to be carried by at least two people. Over 8 tons of rocks were gathered to cover less than half of the house.

Constructing walls was also difficult. Professor Clark estimated it would have taken four men and one donkey “approximately one month of concentrated labor to collect stones for and construct the exterior walls of the first story” of a two-story home at Umayri. For homeowners who had other responsibilities (farming, tending livestock or industrial work), the process would have taken longer.

We know too that the walls of Israelite homes were often coated with plaster, which was made primarily of lime. A worker would have to collect large quantities of limestone, heat it until only lime remained, and then mix it with a fine aggregate like sand. “Although the technology involved in the production of lime plaster is relatively simple,” Clark wrote, “the expense in raw materials and manpower is great.”

Homes were also constructed using man-made bricks, made from a mix of straw, clay and water. This too was back-breaking work. According to Prof. David Oates, “Mud-brick was by far the most common building material employed in the ancient Near East, and its use persists in the countryside to the present day” (“Innovations in Mud-Brick: Decorative and Structural Techniques in Ancient Mesopotamia”). Oates estimated that 100 mud-bricks required about 60 kilograms (132 pounds) of straw, requiring almost one third of an acre of cultivation.

Workers had to harvest a substantial amount of lumber for ceilings and roofs. Wooden beams ran across the tops of walls or pillars to hold up the structure’s roof. Rafters also ran between the beams, as shown in a four-room house at Tel Qasile. Atop these beams, brush was layered and then covered by mud, clay or plaster. Roofs required constant maintenance, especially during the rainy season.

A Few Examples

How many of these homes have been uncovered in excavation? According to Professors Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz, “Hundreds of four-room houses are known

Israelite Homes

This map shows the widespread distribution of four-room houses throughout Iron Age Israel.

-
- 1 Hazor
 - 2 Tell Dalheimiya
 - 3 Shikmona
 - 4 Yoqne'am
 - 5 Tel Qiri
 - 6 Megiddo
 - 7 Tel Mevorakh
 - 8 Dothan
 - 9 Tell el-Far'ah
 - 10 Shechem
 - 11 Qarnei Shomron
 - 12 Tell Sa'diyeh
 - 13 Tel Qasile
 - 14 Aphek
 - 15 'Izbet Sartah
 - 16 Deir el-Mir
 - 17 'Ai
 - 18 Horvat Raddana
 - 19 Tell en-Nasbeh
 - 20 Gibeon
 - 21 Jerusalem
 - 22 Jericho
 - 23 Vered Jericho
 - 24 Horvat Shilha
 - 25 Tel Batash
 - 26 Beit Shemesh
 - 27 Lachish
 - 28 Tell el-Hesi
 - 29 Tell Beit Mirsim
 - 30 Tell esh Shari'a
 - 31 Tell Jemmeh
 - 32 Tell Be'ersheba
 - 33 Tell Malhata
 - 34 Tel Masos
 - 35 Atar Haro'eh
 - 36 Khirbet Ritma
 - 37 Horvat Haluqim
 - 38 Ramat Matred
 - 39 Tell el-Kheleife
 - 40 Tel Umayri

From “The Casemate Wall, the Four-Room House, and Early Planning in the Israelite City” Yigal Shiloh, 1987. With additions.

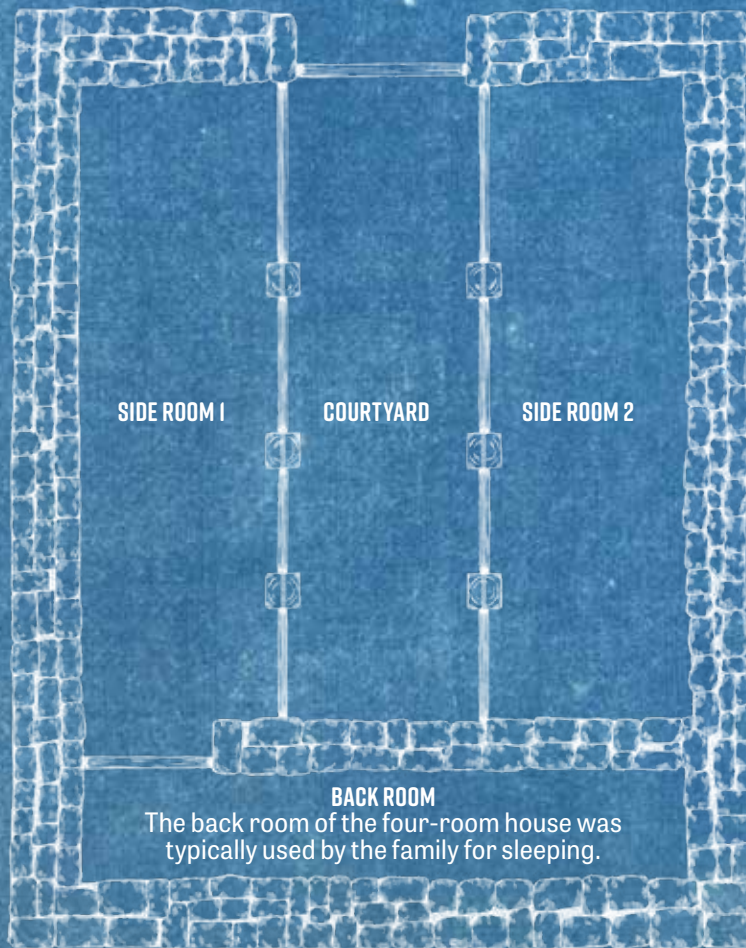
today from Iron Age sites mainly concentrated in the highlands (i.e. the Galilee), the Central Hill Country and the Transjordanian Plateau” (“The Four-Room House: Embodying Iron Age Israelite Society”).

Numerous four-room houses have been uncovered at Beersheba, one of Israel’s southernmost towns. In 1996, salvage excavations uncovered an Israelite home that revolved around a 12½-meter-long (41 feet) courtyard. Archaeologists believe “this structure served as a large residential dwelling during Iron II B–III C” (“Be’er Sheva, Ramot Neighborhood, Site 49”). The walls were made of limestone. The pillars separating the rooms were 1 meter apart. Unusually, the house had a staircase that led to a second floor. The first floor was made of ash and tamped chalk, with a slightly higher plaster floor on the western side of the building. Four hearths were discovered inside the building.

Four-Room Houses

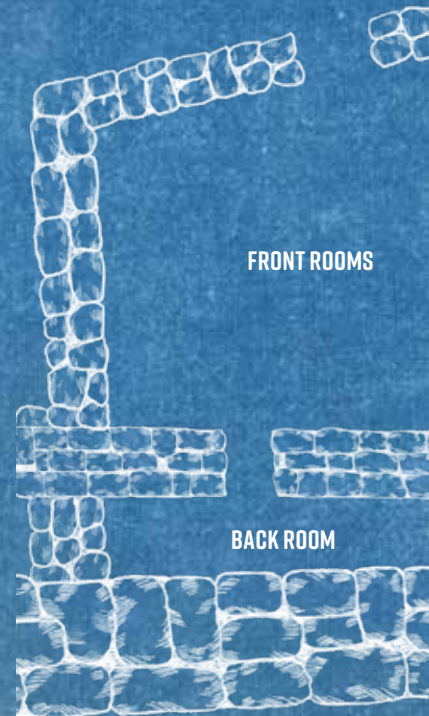
Archaeologists refer to the classic Israelite home as a “four-room house,” based on its design of three long parallel rooms at the front and one room spanning the width of the house at the back. The layout is extremely functional. There

is one main entrance to the building through the central courtyard. Each room is accessible independently from the courtyard, allowing for maximum privacy. The courtyard and two side rooms could be used as a work space, storage and



FRONT ROOMS

In the example to the left, side room 1, side room 2 and the central courtyard form three of the four rooms of the four-room house. In practice, the rooms at the front of the house could be subdivided in any number of ways as needed.



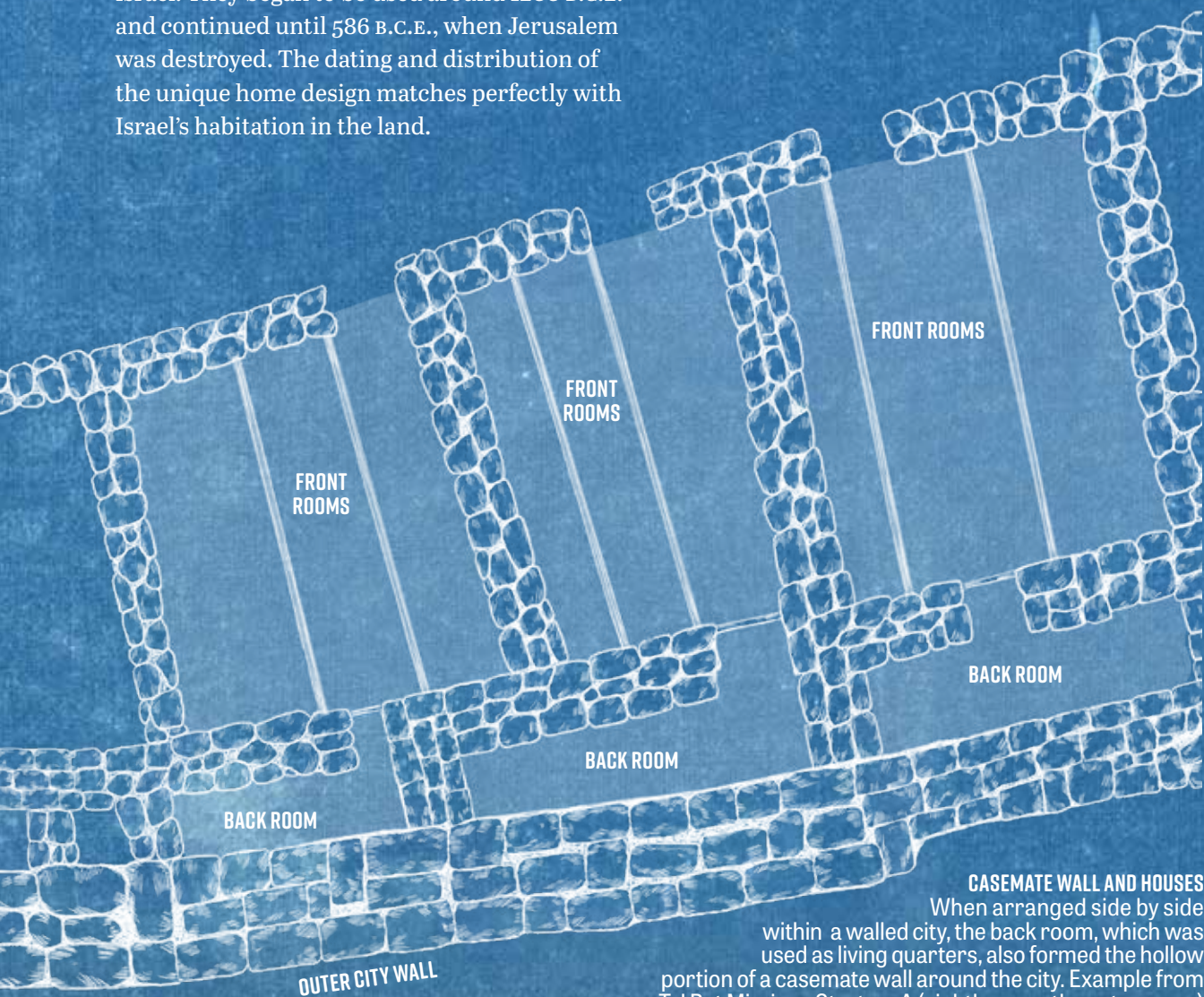
At Tel Halif, an archaeological site in the northern Negev, archaeologists uncovered an eighth-century B.C.E. structure called the “K8 House.” This house was clearly built in the four-room configuration. The house is about 7.5 meters by 6.8 meters (25 feet by 22 feet). The three long rooms were separated by pillars. On either side of the courtyard, one of the rooms was divided in half; the other was divided into thirds.

Wall construction methods vary within this single

structure. The foundation is made of fieldstones, but the upper half of the structure is mud-brick. The floors are a mixture of cobblestones and beaten earth.

Most of the rooms also revealed evidence of food preparation and food storage (Rooms 2, 3, 4 and 5), containing jars for food, liquids and seeds. The floor of Room 3 was covered by fieldstones and possibly mortar. People would have entered through Room 6, which contained a ladder ascending to the roof. The

a holding pen for animals. The back room, and a possible second story, were likely used as living quarters for the family. Dozens of such homes have been identified throughout the land of Israel. They began to be used around 1200 B.C.E. and continued until 586 B.C.E., when Jerusalem was destroyed. The dating and distribution of the unique home design matches perfectly with Israel's habitation in the land.



CASEMATE WALL AND HOUSES
When arranged side by side within a walled city, the back room, which was used as living quarters, also formed the hollow portion of a casemate wall around the city. Example from Tel Bet Mirsim—Stratum A (eighth–seventh century B.C.E.)

central courtyard contained storage jars, cookware, a few lamps and a saddle quern (used for grinding grains). Unfortunately, the broad room (Room 1) has eroded. It is unclear which discoveries came from the second floor and fell during the home's conflagration, but the K8 House at Tel Halif provides a rough understanding of the items within an Israelite home and insight into the activities the families were generally engaged in.

Megiddo has a large public structure built in the four-room style called "Palace 6000." The walls were built of ashlar stone. Portions of the walls were plastered. Some of the floors utilized ashlars; other areas were packed earth and crushed chalk. Prof. Israel Finkelstein described the structure as a "large, monumentally built, almost square, four-room house" (*Megiddo IV*). Archaeologists have theorized what this structure was used for: a "residency, palace, citadel and/

or tower” (“Palace 6000 at Megiddo in Context”). It is evident that this four-room layout was used for more than just the average Israelite home; in this instance, the design was used in a large public building or royal structure.

At Beth Shean, Prof. Amihai Mazar discovered a four-room house that he called “one of the largest Iron Age II dwellings excavated in Israel thus far, and probably served as the residence of a high-ranking family” (“Tel Beth-Shean: History and Archaeology”). Each of its rooms was subdivided into two, creating six rooms in total.

The house is about 100 square meters, not including the second story. There is debate over whether the size of a house is related to the size or wealth of the family. Though both surely were factors, Mazar concluded, “Many biblical sources relate to wealth distinctions in Israelite society, and it can be surmised that the size of a house reflects the wealth of the family rather than the social structure of its inhabitants” (*Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean 1989–1996*).

Professor Mazar discovered signs of domestic industry such as food preparation, weaving and storage. This building is notable because there is no indication that it was used for livestock care, showing this high-ranking family was evidently not engaged in agricultural enterprises like the common Israelite family.

Four-room homes have been discovered as far north as Hazor. Prof. Yigael Yadin described one as “the most beautifully planned and preserved building among the Israelite structures at Hazor.” Unusually, it was a stand-alone home in the middle of the city.

Including both the first and second floor, it is estimated to be about 160 square meters (around 1,720 square feet), making it abnormally large. Professor Faust wrote, “Its size clearly demonstrates that it was inhabited by a large and wealthy family” (“Socioeconomic Stratification in an Israelite City: Hazor VI as a Test Case”). This home is also notable for the quality of its construction.

At least five other four-room houses have been discovered and documented in Hazor, all in the vicinity of this larger home. These homes are only about 70 square meters, and they all tend to share walls. Archaeologists have studied the disparity between these structures and the large structure to better understand the difference in living conditions between the wealthy and the average household.

Of the hundreds of four-room homes that have been discovered, these five cities exemplify the wide geographical distribution of the four-room home throughout Israel. Numerous other four-room houses have been studied at a variety of other sites, including

but not limited to the City of David in Jerusalem, Tel Shikmona, Tel Batash, Tel Miqne-Ekron, Khirbet ed-Dawwara, Tel Umayri, Izbet Sartah, Tel Masos, Nahal Yatir, Tel en-Nasbeh, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Shechem, as well as in several excavations among the rural areas of the central highlands. These and other sites represent the Negev, the Shephelah, Sharon, Upper and Lower Galilee, the Transjordan, the central country of Israel and even Philistia.

Addressing the Outliers

Are four-room homes unique to Israel? The discovery of a few four-room homes outside of Israel has led some to question the association with Israel. Two homes discovered in the Philistine site of Tel esh-Sharia led one scholar to conclude that “the ‘four-room house’ originally belonged to the Philistine architectural tradition and was later adopted by the Israelites” (*The Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land 1978*). Another “four-room house” dating to the early 12th century B.C.E. was discovered in Thebes, Egypt. However, it violates one of the principal features of a four-room house: Its entrance is in the rear broad room. The similarities between it and an Israelite four-room house seems merely coincidental.

The primary arguments against the Philistines inventing the four-room house relate to distribution and dating. While there have been a few four-room homes discovered outside the geographic boundaries of Iron Age Israel, archaeological evidence of the four-room house is much more abundant inside Israel’s borders. Rather than prove that Israel copied another culture, the presence of these houses actually shows Israel’s cultural influence on its neighbors.

There has not yet been any evidence of four-room homes from the Canaanite period. This domestic architectural style seems to be a unique Israelite invention. Professor Faust concluded, “Thus, even if some other people used it occasionally, the Israelites used it extensively, and it is legitimate to label it as the Israelite house.”

Why So Popular?

There are several theories that explain why the four-room house, which originated in the central highlands, became a distinct cultural feature of the Israelites.

Professor Shiloh said it seems “eminently reasonable” that the four-room house design evolved out of Israel’s tents, “however, the proof for this theory still comes from the ethnographic-sociological sphere rather than from archaeological data.”

Several archaeologists have suggested that the four-room house became so widespread because of its functionality. Since each room was accessible by the

central courtyard, certain rooms in an Israelite home could be made private. You didn't have to pass through one room to enter another—unlike many Canaanite and Philistine homes. Biblical scholar Moshe Weinfeld believes this architectural feature was a function of the Torah, which required separation or quarantine for people at certain times, such as a man's avoidance of a woman during menstruation or if a family member became sick.

The Israelite home was also functional from an agricultural perspective. One of the front rooms was often used for the care of domesticated animals; in fact, many of the homes had stalls. The Passover lamb, for instance, would be accommodated in the Israelite home for four days of every year. The Bible refers to a "fatted calf" many times, which could also be translated "stall-fed calf." The front three spaces of the home were also utilized for other domestic production efforts, like making pottery, weaving clothes, pressing oil, grinding grain, and preparing food.

Though functional, the four-room house fell out of use at the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. "Its disappearance from the archaeological record in the sixth century B.C.E. is quite sudden," Faust and Bunimovitz wrote. "No functional explanation can account for the house's sudden loss of popularity. If the house was so suitable for 'peasant life' in the Iron Age, why did the peasants living in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods stop using it?" (op cit).

Consider also: The four-room house was utilized by both the rich and the poor, who lived vastly different lifestyles. It was also used in public buildings for entirely different purposes. These factors seem to indicate that the four-room house was adopted for cultural and ethnic reasons.

Professor Faust writes that the four-room house can be defined by an "ethos" of "egalitarianism and simplicity," which he says are features of Israelite society attested to both archaeologically and biblically.

"We believe that the four-room house embodied Israelite society and values and can be seen as a microcosm of the Israelite world," Faust and Bunimovitz concluded. They focus that statement primarily on the importance of the Israelite family unit in Israelite culture. In ancient Hebrew, the word for "house" (בית) is almost synonymous with *family* or *dynasty*, as is reflected in the Bible and in discoveries like the Tel Dan Stele, which describes the Davidic dynasty as בית דוד.

Prof. Shimon Dar believes that some of the large four-room houses discovered in rural settlements of Israel housed an extended Israelite family. The term "father's house" is used throughout the biblical account

from this period. In Judges 6:15, for instance, Gideon says, "Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Jephthah was similarly cast out of his "father's house." It is unclear how literally the term "house" should be taken, but the strong association between these two words shows how essential the Israelite home was to the Israelite family and, thus, to Israelite culture.

'An Architecture of Power'

Though four-room houses were in use prior to the 10th century B.C.E., they were located in the central hill country of Israel and Judah and were not the primary architectural style. Notably, it is exactly in the time period of kings David and Solomon that the four-room home design became common throughout Israel.

Professor Faust wrote, "[T]hese 'formally' designed houses, which are often large and nicely built, are now (in Iron II A) found over a much larger area, including the Shephelah, the Sharon, the northern valleys, the Negev highlands and the Arava" ("The 'United Monarchy' on the Ground"). This is further evidence of a kingdom united under one monarch and central administration that exported order and culture.

Faust suggested that the growth in popularity of the Israelite-style house was actually a purposeful decision by a central Israelite administration. He said its growth in unanimity across an expanded territory "shows that the form was rather abruptly selected at the very beginning of the Iron Age II to transmit a certain message—an *architecture of power*; hence its formal plan, nice execution ... and very wide geographical distribution" (emphasis added).

The Israelite administration from Jerusalem would have commissioned the construction of public buildings, like the one at Megiddo, to be done in the blueprint of a four-room house. It's clear that the campaign to establish four-room homes throughout the kingdom was successful. Archaeology shows that both the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern tribes of Israel continued constructing Israelite-style homes long after the split.

Archaeology has given us unique insight into the domestic sphere of the ancient Israelites. Many biblical accounts feature an Israelite home. Understanding the layout of those homes helps us understand the environs that shaped biblical characters and events. As Sir Winston Churchill said, "We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us."

The Israelite home was an outgrowth of ancient Israel's unique culture, and it undoubtedly continued to shape the Bible's foremost nation at its most fundamental level. ■

An Interview With Prof. Michael Langlois

THE MESHA STELE (OR MOABITE Inscription) is a victory relief belonging to the ninth-century B.C.E. Moabite King Mesha. The text on the stele pairs with the biblical account recorded in 2 Kings 3.

This once complete inscription was found in Jordan by local Bedouin and became known to French archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau in 1868. In 1869, Arab intermediaries were sent to the camp to make a “squeeze,” a papier-mâché schematic copy of the impression. Not long after the copy was made, the stele was smashed. The majority of the Mesha Stele was reproduced, thanks largely to Clermont-Ganneau’s “squeeze.” The stele is currently on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

In 1992, French epigrapher André Lemaire announced a new reading for Line 31 of the inscription. He claimed that *Bet David* or “house of David” was the best reading of a part of the inscription. For decades this reading was met with some serious skepticism. However, with the arrival of advanced imaging technology in recent years, the reading of “house of David” has become all but certain according to some scholars, including Prof. Michael Langlois.

In late April, we interviewed Professor Langlois about his research on the inscription and the oft debated topic of King David’s historicity. Here is an excerpt from that interview. This text has been edited for clarity.



BRENT NAGTEGAAL [BN]: Thank you for your time. Let's get to the meat of the controversy over this inscription, the infamous Line 31. Maybe you could start by telling us about the debate and why there is difficulty in reading this line specifically.

MICHAEL LANGLOIS [ML]: Sure. The difficulty lies in the fact that the stone was broken, so there are a number of pieces that are missing. But before the stone was broken, a squeeze was made of the stone itself. Today we have the squeeze; it is in Paris. And it was the basis used to reconstruct the stone. If you look at the stone today in the Louvre Museum, you will see ancient pieces and also some modern reconstruction.



PROFESSOR LANGLOIS

BN: What do you mean by squeeze?

ML: Well, you take some kind of thin sheet that looks a bit like plaster and basically you apply it over the stone. You wait till it dries, and when it's dry, you can take it off, leaving an imprint of the inscription. So that's the idea of a squeeze. ... And we have the squeeze, but the squeeze, again, is not perfect. This is because the young boy who made it had to leave before it was dry.

Already in the late 19th century there were a number of proposed readings for the inscription, including one by Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau in France, among others. When it came to Line 31, no one agreed on what letters should be read at the end of the line. ... So you have a number of possible combinations. But no one thought that one of the possible combinations read "house of David." This was suggested first by another French scholar, André Lemaire, in the 1990s, just *before* the discovery of the Tel Dan inscription (which is clearly inscribed with the phrase "house of David"). So the discovery of the Tel Dan Stele confirmed that "house of David" was a possible

reading on the Mesha Stele. But somehow a number of people refused to accept this reading.

Then when we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the discovery of the Mesha inscription in 2018, I decided to use modern techniques, especially Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), to see if I could get a better reading of Line 31 and other lines. When I did that [and restudied the text], I concluded that the only two possible readings that made sense in the context and with the shape of the lines were either *Bet David*, which means the "house of David," or *Ben David*, which is "son of David." Either way, this text designated the king that was ruling at the time, either calling him a descendant of King David or someone from the house of David, which means the dynasty of David.

BN: I want to take you to a paper that was written five years ago by Israel Finkelstein, Nadav Naaman and Thomas Romer: "Restoring Line 31 in the Mesha Stele, the House of David, or Biblical Balak," where they suggested it said Balak instead of anything related to David. Did you know about what they were saying or was it just happenstance that it came out as your research was coming out?

ML: No, I didn't. In 2018 I published a paper presenting my findings with the Mesha inscription, and this is around when their paper was published. I didn't have time to properly respond to their paper. But I thought that my own analysis was quite conclusive and that I didn't need to respond to their paper in too much detail.

To make it simple, they made a very, very bad mistake. They looked at the stone itself, and a part of the stone that is *reconstructed*—that is, they looked at the modern plaster that they put on the stone. They studied the stroke on the *modern plaster* and said, *Look, there is a stroke that says it's the end of the sentence.* One of the elements of the syntax on the Mesha inscription

I concluded that the only two possible readings that made sense in the context and with the shape of the lines were either *Bet David*, which means the "house of David," or *Ben David*, which is "son of David."

is that sentences are separated by a vertical stroke, which is quite unusual even at the time.

So this is their main mistake: They think that this vertical stroke is part of the stone, but actually it's part of the modern reconstruction. You can easily see this if you go to Paris or even if you look at pictures of the stone. For this part of the inscription, you have to look at the squeeze (not just the stone)—this is what I did.

I'm a mathematician by training, so I do think systematically. I looked at every possible stroke, every possible letter, every possible combination. And really, *Balak* is not one of them. There is no natural reading of Balak.

Also, I think it's interesting that the scholars who complain that we want to read biblical names everywhere outside of the Bible are doing the same thing. Balak is not mentioned anywhere outside the Bible. It's almost as if they would rather read any name except David.

Following their own line of argument, I could say, *Well, as far as I'm concerned, Balak never even existed. He's a purely fictional character because he's only mentioned in the Bible.* I'm not saying that's what I'm saying, but this is the typical argument by minimalists who would, you know, disregard any biblical character if they're not mentioned outside the Bible.

Anyway, they would prefer to read the name Balak, of a character that is only mentioned in the Bible once, rather than what the shape of the letters leads us to conclude. And again, when I read the letters, I didn't try to read only David. I looked for every possible reading, as you can read in my paper.

I did my best to come up with possibilities other than David. I didn't try to push for reading David, but that's



Digital drawing of the proposed reading, end of line 31 of the Mesha inscription.



the only possible reading. So I was really sad about their paper. And actually, my paper was released shortly after the publication of their paper. They hadn't consulted with me before they published their own paper. This is unfortunate, because I had the RT1 photographs that I could have given them. We could have shared our research. I even spoke to one of the people from their team—a student who had been working with them—and I told him this, and even he felt bad. He told me, "I know you're right. But they wouldn't listen." It's sad.

BN: It doesn't help that every one of these authors prior to publishing this paper had been on crusade against David. I'm reminded of Prof. Yosef Garfinkel's excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa and when it was revealed that it was a 10th-century B.C.E. site. Everyone agreed that it's a 10th-century site, which is the time period of King David. But then many said it could not belong to David and suggested several ethnicities. First it was a Philistine site, then Canaanite, and then an ethnicity we'd never heard of. It could be anything but Judah. And then somebody said, *OK, it's not King David. It's actually King Saul.* This is what you experienced. As a last

But there are tensions just because we are talking about Jerusalem and King David. If it were any other place, any other name of any other king, it would be OK. It would be fine.

resort, some scholars will accept it could be a biblical character, just as long as it's not David, or a figure from the Davidic dynasty.

ML: Yes, that's a very good example. I remember reading that too.

We're trying to do solid scholarship and to look at the facts. But again, even when the Tel Dan inscription was published and it was known to say "house of David," the skeptics had plenty of other explanations. But really, this is a common phrase. It's the phrase that designates the dynasty of this king. We have this phrase in Akkadian inscriptions, in other inscriptions from the same time period, with other kings from other kingdoms. If this phrase is associated with the kingdom of Damascus or any other place, it's completely fine; no one will question it.

But there are tensions just because we are talking about Jerusalem and King David. If it were any other place, any other name of any other king, it would be OK. It would be fine.

This is where I see that people are not objective. It's indicative of the fact that people really don't want it to be David. They want to find an excuse for it not to be David when, you know, I'm just doing science and that's what the facts tell me.

I mean, you don't have to believe everything the Bible says about David. I mean, the faith is something different. Right? I'm not trying to convince people to become believers or anything like that. But for me, it is a fact that there was a kingdom called Judah and then a capital city named Jerusalem, and there was a dynasty, and King David was remembered as the founder of this dynasty. You don't have to believe the story of David and Goliath. But please don't remove David completely out of the picture just because you don't want him to be there. You know, if he's here, he's here, and that's it.

BN: When you reexamined the Mesha Stele using the new technology, you were able to see something no one else had seen. You were able to identify a dot. Why was this important?

ML: Yes, it's only a dot, so you could say it's a small contribution. But again, syntax is important. And we talked earlier about those vertical strokes that separate sentences. Dots separate words. I found this dot, which is, again, very helpful to see how many letters you have in that word. So ... that's why I was able to say, you have *dalet*, *vav*, *dalet*—and then the dot, which tells you it's the end of the word. It's important because without a dot, you can split words differently.

So the fact that there is this dot is key because it tells us that it is the end of a word. And again, if you don't have that many words that end with *vav*, *dalet*; if you have a *dalet* before, then the only possible reading is David. So sometimes the minor details are important.

In the Bible, it tells you that if you add or remove a single letter, it makes a difference. In that case, I would say it's similar to what you read in the Bible; even the tiniest dot makes a big difference. And it was key in the present case.

BN: This is where the Tel Dan Stele connects. Because there is a dot before the *Bet*, and then there's a dot after the final *dalet* of David. You discovered basically the same syntax on the Mesha Stele.

What do your epigrapher colleagues think of your reading? Are they reticent to give their opinion, or have we reached a point of consensus where many agree the Mesha Stele says "house of David"?

ML: Well, I would say that, first, there aren't that many scholars who are able to discuss those topics because it's quite technical. There are not that many people who work on ancient Hebrew and Aramaic epigraphy. So there are not that many people I can talk to. But yes, most of them are convinced. I showed the pictures. Some of them wanted me to show them the RTI imaging.

Again, I didn't think it was such a strong [remarkable] discovery, since we have the Tel Dan inscription, which is very clear. So I don't think my contribution is that big because, for me, it was already clear that we have the "house of David" on the Tel Dan inscription. But of course, the fact that it's mentioned a second time, at the same time period, is very interesting.

It's interesting too because it's written by people from abroad—the king of Moab [the Mesha Stele], the king of Damascus [the Tel Dan Stele]. Those people do not want us to believe in the Bible or to believe in the God of the Bible. They are enemies. They are actually enemies of Israel. And from these inscriptions we see that even the enemies knew at the time that whoever is ruling in Jerusalem is of the house of David. So it tells us a lot about the fame and the fact that there's a clear hierarchy and dynasty in Jerusalem that is known even to the neighbors, even to the enemies. So in that regard, I think it's quite interesting that we would have two mentions of the house of David at about the same time.

BN: Yes, I think it's fascinating. Thank you so much for sticking with it and just going where the scientific evidence led you. ■

Face Value: Two New Coin Disco

What two recently discovered coins reveal about two vastly different periods in Judah **BY GEORGE HADDAD**

COINS ARE VITAL TO HISTORIANS and archaeologists. Though small, they can provide firm dates that can give context to a layer or an entire site. A coin found at the base of a house, for example, can show that the structure was built *after* the date that coin was minted. Coins are also excellent indicators of who traded with whom, for what, and how much. Finally, the text or images on coins will often depict important cultural events or figures, and this can help historians better understand the society in question.

Two important coins discovered in the past few months provide insight into Judah during two vastly different periods: the Persian Period and the Bar Kokhba Revolt.



Persian Period Coin

An exceptionally rare silver coin, dating to the mid-sixth century B.C.E. (Persian Period), was recently discovered at a small site in the Judean Hills. “The coin is extremely

rare, joining only half a dozen coins of its type that have been found in archaeological excavations in the country,” Dr. Robert Kool, head of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) numismatic department, said. “The coin was minted in a period when the use of coins had just begun.”

The coin is pressed with a square stamp, demonstrating an earlier, “sunken” minting. Coins would eventually utilize the more sophisticated “protruding” stamp style. According to Dr. Kool, “The coin belongs to a group of very early coins that were minted outside Israel in the regions of ancient Greece, Cyprus and Turkey.”

The early dating of this coin is also evidenced by the fact that it was intentionally cut into two pieces to be used as a form of “hacksilver” (a pre-coin currency, where irregularly shaped pieces of silver were valued by weight). According to the IAA, this indicated that the economy was still in transition; using coins for trade and commerce wasn’t yet universal. This coin gives us evidence of “the process whereby global commerce moved from payment by weighing silver pieces to the use of coins.”

‘Eleazar the Priest’ Coin

On March 4, the IAA announced the discovery of another rare coin, this one minted in “Year One” of the Bar

Kokhba Revolt (132 C.E.).

This particular coin, discovered in the Mazuq Ha-he’teqim Nature Reserve, is embossed in ancient paleo-Hebrew script with the name “Eleazar the Priest.” It was found alongside three other coins from the same period, each bearing the name “Simon,” referring to the leader of the revolt.

Traditional Jewish motifs were also employed in the design, with a date palm on the side that bears the name of the priest. On the other side, a bunch of grapes is displayed alongside the inscription, “Year One of the Redemption of Israel” (similar to the message carried on the final coins of the Great Revolt in 70 C.E.).

Who is Eleazar the Priest? One candidate is Rabbi Eleazar Hamoda’i (aka Eleazer of Modi’im), who was a cousin of Simon Bar Kokhba. “It seems that Rabbi Eleazar Hamoda’i played a significant religious role at the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and he was living in the town of Beitar—the location of the revolt headquarters,” the press release stated. Eleazar Hamoda’i was slain by the Bar Kokhba for a disagreement over the rebellion.

Coins and currency were controlled by the Roman government at this time. State-authorized coins were stamped with the image of the emperor. Revolt

veries



coins were a way for the rebels to reject the authority of Roman rule and declare their independence. One particularly notable feature of Jewish revolt coins is the use of ancient Hebrew script. This deliberate choice to use the early script of the biblical kingdom represents a callback to ancestry and history and to the desire to reestablish the kingdom.

This coin presents a bookend of the Judean people's history in ancient coinage. An autonomous Jewish state would not mint coins in Israel again until 1948.

Between the Persian Period and the Bar Kokhba Revolt, coins became a centerpiece of commerce and identity in Judea. Today, they are objects of fascinating study for historians, archaeologists and numismatists. ■

CARBON FROM PAGE 6

the archaeologists noted that the earthquake layer related to a nearby city wall, which was thought to have been built by King Hezekiah. Now they know it was likely built by King Uzziah, a known builder of Jerusalem—2 Chronicles 26:9.)

By recalibrating the curve using these two biblical events, scientists revealed a huge shift in the amount of carbon 14 in the atmosphere from 730 to 710 B.C.E. This shift was already reflected in worldwide calibration data. However, the study showed that there was an even greater carbon-14 enrichment taking place locally in the land of Israel than elsewhere.

In the future, this more precise carbon-14 chronology gained by the 11 consecutive floors might yield one of the most important results of the City of David radiocarbon study. These two dates allowed the researchers to more accurately provide regional calibration data for other samples in the intervening floors. The researchers were then able to give more accurate dates to the pottery styles found inside each layer, which can now be used to further refine dating of other sites in Israel featuring those same pottery styles. Thus, the knowledge gained from this study—which combined archaeological stratigraphy, radiocarbon samples and the biblical text—is making possible more accurate dating of future discoveries in the late Iron Age.

Welcome to biblical archaeology in the 21st century! Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, director of the Khirbet Qeiyafa excavation, once remarked that the most important discovery of his excavation was the humble carbon samples—the olive pits. Without them, he would not have had the dating tools to confirm an early 10th-century B.C.E. date for the site. Archaeologists were then able to use the pottery found at Qeiyafa (dated by the short-lived carbon samples) as a key to the dating of their own sites to the 10th century.

This new Jerusalem radiocarbon study can function as a similar all-important key for other sites from the eighth to sixth century B.C.E.

Thanks to this study, we can say with much greater confidence that Jerusalem at the time of David and Solomon was more a city than a village, as the minimalists claim. This study also supports the old-house effect in Jerusalem.

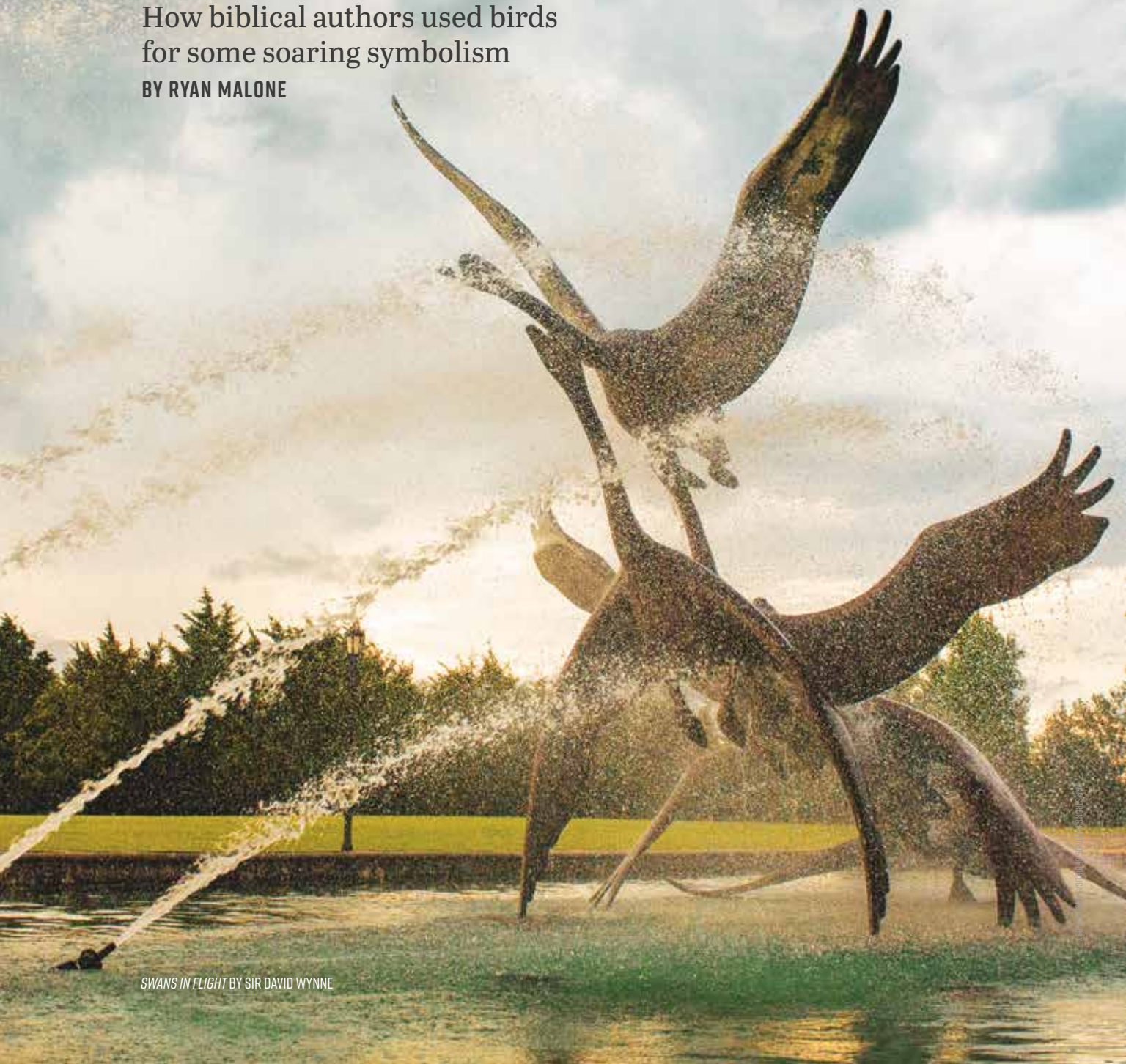
Beyond these two crucial developments, this new study also gives archaeologists the ability to refine their dating of archaeological remains all across Israel!

Congratulations to the devoted team of researchers for their painstaking efforts over the past few years to conduct this landmark carbon-dating study! Thanks to their efforts, archaeologists excavating Jerusalem now and in the future will find it easier to answer the question—*when was it made?* ■

Winged Wisdom

How biblical authors used birds
for some soaring symbolism

BY RYAN MALONE



SWANS IN FLIGHT BY SIR DAVID WYNNE

THE ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL Archaeology is associated with the world-class Armstrong Auditorium in Edmond, Oklahoma. The theater inside this venue has hosted some of the finest performers on the concert circuit today. Its lobby has been home to three world-premiere archaeological exhibits, including our current “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” exhibition. But one thing every visitor encounters before even entering the building is the majestic *Swans in Flight* sculpture, by the late sculptor Sir David Wynne.

The sculpture stands amid a 120-foot reflecting pool and depicts the five stages of a swan taking flight. The wingspan of each bird is 15 feet. When the six water jets cascade over the sculpture, it is



easy to imagine the birds in motion—despite the fact that this work of art weighs nearly four tons.

Birds have captured the imagination of artists, composers and writers for millenniums. They’ve been used symbolically in a variety of ways.

Our namesake, Herbert W. Armstrong, commissioned Sir David Wynne to create a sculpture representing prayer. Wynne felt that egrets were the most universal representation of that, and he created magnificent sculpture of five egrets with outstretched wings, ascending upward.

Biblical authors knew birds were a striking muse for a number of metaphors. These authors took abstract concepts and made them inspiring, encouraging and motivating—using birds.

Confirming the Creator’s Character

A study of Scripture’s birds yields numerous verses. Some references are more functional to a narrative or plot—listing creatures in sacrifices, dietary instructions or trade (e.g. King Solomon’s peacock exports), or as a key detail in specific histories (e.g. Noah and Elijah). But in many cases, they represent much loftier concepts.

Biblical authors used birds to illustrate the genius and caring of the Creator they were trying to describe. In Psalm 50, Asaph (or perhaps David himself) quoted the divine voice as saying: “I know all the fowls of the mountains...” (verse 11).

Psalm 147:9 and Job 38:41 credit God with feeding young ravens. The raven expels its young from the nest as soon as it is able to fly. Unable to obtain food, they will make a croaking noise, and the Bible says God hears this. He created an ecosystem ensuring these creatures are fed.

God questioned Job, asking, “Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom, And stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the vulture mount up at thy command, And make her

nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, Upon the crag of the rock, and the stronghold. From thence she spieth out the prey; Her eyes behold it afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood; And where the slain are, there is she” (Job 39:26-30).

Many translations render “vulture” (נשר) as “eagle,” a species known for its ability to fly and nest at extreme heights. A bald eagle’s wing muscles account for half its body weight. The muscles that pull the wings down are the largest of the flight muscles, allowing it to gain altitude without much effort. This allows it to get high enough to make such elevated nests; some reaching as high as 200 feet in the air.





GOLDEN EAGLE

Representing the Divine

Biblical authors saw birds as evidence of God's brilliance and benevolence. But they also used them in more symbolic and poetic ways as a metaphor for God Himself.

In Exodus 19:4, Moses quotes God to describe how He bore them out of Egypt "on eagles' wings." In Deuteronomy 32, Moses explicitly likens God to an eagle: "As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, Hovereth over her young, Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, Beareth them on her pinions—The Lord alone did lead him, And there was no strange god with Him" (verses 11-12). An adult eagle guides its offspring on its first flight by flying close to it. In the event the youngling tires or falters, the adult will swoop beneath it and support it with the air current of its own wings. There is evidence from nature that at least one type of eagle does what this verse says.

Arthur Cleveland Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey, Part 1*, relates a stunning account of one observer of the

golden eagle in Ojai, California: "Last summer ... my father and I ... noticed a golden eagle teaching its young one to fly. ... The mother started from the nest in the crags, and roughly handling the young one, she allowed him to drop, I should say, about 90 feet, then she would swoop down under him, wings spread, and he would alight on her back. She would soar to the top of the range with him and repeat the process. One time she waited perhaps 15 minutes between flights, I should say the farthest she let him fall was 150 feet. My father and I watched this, spellbound, for over an hour. I do not know whether the young one gained confidence by this method or not. A few days later, Father and I rode to the cliff and out on Overhanging Rock. The eagle's nest was empty."

Here is a powerful analogy penned by Isaiah: "As birds hovering, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem; He will deliver it as He protecteth it, He will rescue it as He passeth over" (Isaiah 31:5). Isaiah used this metaphor to show how God would protect Jerusalem from an Assyrian siege. He was speaking to Hezekiah who was facing an impending attack from King Sennacherib. This is a notable verse in light of remarkable archaeological discoveries.

In 2009, the seal of King Hezekiah was discovered on the Ophel in Jerusalem. One of the motifs on this bulla is a sun with downturned wings, evocative of the image in Isaiah 31:5.

Another remarkably identical image is used centuries later in the book of Malachi, specifically related to healing: "But unto you that fear My name Shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings ..." (Malachi 3:20; 4:2 in other translations). Hezekiah, in addition to facing an Assyrian siege from which he needed protection, was also facing a terminal illness (Isaiah 38:1-8).

Representing the Human

Birds are also used in the biblical text to symbolize aspects of human existence. "O deliver not the soul of Thy turtle-dove unto the wild beast ..." (Psalm 74:19).

Twice in the Song of Songs, a dove is used as a symbol for a bride's beauty (Song of Songs 2:14; 5:2).

Some of these comparisons are less than complimentary. Hosea 7:11 says Ephraim is "like a silly dove." Doves are known for not resisting attacks or retaliating against enemies, which can be an admirable characteristic in avoiding unnecessary conflict, but here it is used to illustrate a foolish pacifist attitude.

Jeremiah said this unthinking



HEZEKIAH BULLA



TURTLE DOVE

bird (and a couple others) had more knowledge than those he was warning: “Yea, the stork in the heaven Knoweth her appointed times; And the turtle [dove] and the swallow and the crane Observe the time of their coming; But My people know not The ordinance of the Lord” (Jeremiah 8:7).

The eagle is used as a representation of God’s greatness, but it can also be used to symbolize human shortcoming. Jeremiah uses the eagle’s elevated abode as a symbol for human haughtiness: “Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, Even the pride of thy heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, That holdest the height of the hill; Though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 49:16). Obadiah 3 and 4 make an almost identical point.

Lamentations 4:3 and Job 39:13-18 use the ostrich’s uncaring treatment of her eggs as a metaphor for the tendencies of human nature.

Many of the uses of birds symbolizing human elements, however, can be divided into three broad categories: 1) representative of trials or feelings of loneliness; 2) representative of our search for protection and refuge; and 3) representative of the spiritual strength available.

Symbolic of Trials

Biblical writers often relied on bird metaphors while enduring sore trials. They intended readers to be comforted by their words in times of distress.



OSTRICH

In Job’s sore trial, he lamented that he was a “brother to jackals, And a companion to ostriches” (Job 30:29). Bible commentaries point out that both animals utter mournful cries, and both are usually found in desolate, solitary places. The ostrich is known for its shrill shrieks in the night.

The Prophet Micah used both creatures as a symbol of his wailing and mourning (Micah 1:8). Though there is some dispute over what kind of birds Micah and Job were discussing, the comparisons to shrill screeches from these fowls still stand.

When Hezekiah was healed of a terminal illness, he wrote a song to memorialize God’s healing power. The song also describes his sickness: “Like a swallow or a crane, so do I chatter, I do moan as a dove; Mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed, be Thou my surety” (Isaiah 38:14). “Chatter” could more literally be translated “chirp.” *Lange’s Commentary* states: “Mortally sick, [Hezekiah] can only utter weak murmurs and groans, like the complaining sounds of the

swallow, the crane, the dove.”

The sound of the dove can be likened to a mournful cry (Isaiah 59:11; Ezekiel 7:16). The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* says that the dove was “called by the Arabs the daughter of mourning, from its plaintive note.”

The author of Psalm 102 uses three birds to depict loneliness: “I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am become as an owl of the waste places. I watch, and am become Like a sparrow that is alone upon the housetop” (verses 6-7).

The *Soncino* commentary discusses one’s reaction to seeing a pelican like this: “It was certainly the most somber, austere bird I ever saw. It gave one the blues merely to look at it. [The psalmist] could find no more expressive type of solitude and melancholy by which to illustrate his own sad state.”

Regarding the “sparrow alone upon the housetop” in verse 7, *Soncino* states: “When one of them has lost its mate—a matter of everyday occurrence—he will sit on the housetop alone and lament by the hour his sad bereavement.”



PELICAN

Symbolic of Safety and Strength

Surely we can relate to the feelings of despair and loneliness, but biblical writers also wanted the reader to recognize hope. The other two general categories of bird symbolism related to human existence has to do with how they describe the help available from God—both SAFETY and STRENGTH.

We already examined how wings are used to symbolize God's protective characteristics, especially within the psalms (Psalm 17:8; 36:8; 57:2; 61:5; 63:8; 91:4). But there are several metaphors that depict the



human being as the bird finding escape or refuge.

Psalm 91 is rich with symbolism on both of these ends. Verse 3 likens the one needing protection to a bird being delivered from the “snare of the fowler.” David famously wrote: “And I said: ‘Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah” (Psalm 55:7-8; verses 6-7 in other translations).

Doves commonly nest in holes of rocks for safety. Jeremiah evoked this image, writing: “O ye that dwell in Moab, Leave the cities, and dwell in the rock; And be like the dove that maketh her nest In the sides of the pit's mouth” (Jeremiah 48:28).

We have already discussed the most common bird used in the Bible for strength—the eagle. A lesser-known but no less effective metaphor is found in Zechariah 5: “Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they lifted up the measure between the earth and the heaven” (verse 9).

Storks are known for their powerful wings and the sound created by the air flowing over them. They are able to improve their lifting power with the fingered slots of their primary wings, allowing them to reach an

altitude of three miles while migrating. Their immense wing surface enables them to achieve long-distance flights as well.

Two other verses related to the eagle's strength are worth noting.

In Psalm 103:5, David praises God “[w]ho satisfieth thine old age with good things; So that Thy youth is renewed like the eagle.” He likens the access he had to God's strength as something that could restore vigor to its *youthful* state. The eagle is the perfect symbol for this. It lives to a great age (some have been known to live 40 years) and can retain its vitality through its lifespan. A Greek proverb says, “The eagle's old age is as good as the lark's youth.”

Isaiah was inspired to use a similar metaphor: “But they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles; They shall run, and not be weary; They shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). The way of the eagle in the air is a wonder to human eyes (Proverbs 30:18-19), but Isaiah is teaching how reliance on God gives an unlimited strength. To symbolize this, he writes that it is like an eagle ascending.

Consider also that eagles are often a symbol of swiftness (2 Samuel 1:23; Job 9:26; Jeremiah 4:13). Bald eagles can fly at about 30 miles per hour, but can dive at speeds of up to 100 miles per hour. When diving upon prey, golden eagles have been clocked at about 150 miles per hour. Isaiah is illustrating the “rapid, untiring

forward effort” (*Lange's Commentary*) of the eagle as a metaphor for the strength and renewed energy available to those who totally trust God and go to Him for this rejuvenation.

An Elevated View

Drawing from fowl, biblical authors created a variety of comparisons. They serve as metaphors for the Creator: His blessings, power, protection, security—from wings in general to the specific protective characteristics of the mother eagle.

They serve also as metaphors for us, in both negative ways (our tendency to be gullible, cowardly, even cruel) and positive ways (beauty, gentleness, wisdom, submission and reliance on God).

Birds are used to describe trials and loneliness but also escape, refuge, protection, energy and strength.

Clearly these authors were trying to elevate the vision of readers for generations to come. Such exalted inspiration can be elicited for those who take the time to explore and meditate on these powerful, soaring symbols! ■



Remembering Iran's King Cyrus

There was a time when Iran's leaders supported the Jews and Jewish statehood.

BY BRAD MACDONALD

EVER SINCE IT SNATCHED POWER IN 1979, THE RADICAL Islamist regime that leads Iran has pursued Israel's destruction. For more than 40 years, Tehran has been the *epicenter* of anti-Western sentiment and the global persecution of Jews. The heart-breaking events of Oct. 7, 2023, and the events since have provided a glimpse into the *depths* of Iran's hatred of the Jews.

It would seem like hatred of this magnitude would be built-up over centuries, even millenniums. But this isn't the case. The Iranian people are actually the descendants of one the gentlest of all the ancient empires, an empire that keenly supported the Jews and the Jewish state! The nation of Iran—much to the mortification of the present-day Islamist regime in Tehran—has a noble history of showing tremendous kindness to the Jews!

The man responsible for this policy of altruism was King Cyrus II, widely known as Cyrus the Great. There is much to learn and admire about King Cyrus and no shortage of history on this subject. But the most interesting feature about Cyrus is also the most obscure.

Meet Cyrus

Cyrus II ruled the Persian Empire, also known as the Achaemenid Empire, from 559 to 530 B.C.E. His life

and accomplishments are well documented by Greek, Roman and Persian historians, and by archaeological evidence. Cyrus conquered the mighty Babylonian-Chaldean Empire, paving the way for Persia to become the most powerful kingdom in the world for more than 200 years.

Under Cyrus, the borders of the Persian Empire began to expand to create a massive empire, larger territorially than even the Roman Empire. Persia's borders eventually stretched to Central Asia (Russia's southern border today); as far east as the Indus River (the Pakistan-India border); as far north as the Danube, including Turkey, Crete and the southern parts of Greece and Bulgaria; and as far southwest as Libya.

Cyrus was much more than a prodigious conqueror. He heralded a new style of governance, one that was utterly unlike that of the Assyrians, Babylonians and others before him. He was the opposite of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei today, who, via the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, rules through brutality and fear. Cyrus didn't beat, torture and murder people into submission.

"Cyrus was an outstanding soldier and statesman," *Encyclopedia Britannica* says. "He founded an empire that stretched from the Indus and Jazartes to the Aegean and the borders of Egypt and left behind him a

reputation for justice and clemency ...” (emphasis added throughout). *The Mainstream of Civilization* says, “Cyrus created a new type of empire. Under the close supervision of his government, he permitted the conquered peoples to retain their own customs and religions and their own forms of government.” Imagine how different the Middle East, and even international politics, would be today if Iran’s leaders ruled in the enlightened spirit of King Cyrus?

There were very few revolts or rebellions in Persia. This is because subjects, even those of a different ethnicity, race or religion, tended to be more content. Persia’s more altruistic style of governance was key to the empire’s longevity.

The World’s Greatest City

The Babylonian Empire dominated the Middle East in the early-to-mid sixth century B.C.E. The capital city of Babylon was extraordinarily well fortified, teemed with top-notch soldiers, and had a well-earned aura of impenetrability. It was the greatest city in the world.

The city experienced a massive makeover by King Nebuchadnezzar II in the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. The Babylonian king spared nothing in expanding, fortifying and beautifying his city. Babylon’s legendary hanging gardens, built for the queen who missed her lush, mountainous homeland in Media, were an engineering marvel, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Herodotus records that Babylon covered 507 square kilometers (196 square miles) and was protected by an outer wall that was 95 meters (311 feet) high and 27 meters (87 feet) thick. The walls were so thick, even at the top, that chariots could be driven on them. Access through the fortified walls was controlled by more than 100 bronze gates.

The Euphrates River snaked through the city, like the Thames through London. Inside the outer wall, the banks of the river “were lined and walled with brick. In the wall on either side of the river were 25 gates. There was a bridge 1,080 yards long and 30 feet broad across the river. At either end of this bridge was the royal palace. The more magnificent of these palaces was surrounded by three walls. The middle wall was 300 feet high, with towers 420 feet in height. The inner wall was yet higher. The two inner walls, Ctesias tells



The Fall of Babylon
by John Martin

us, were of colored brick. Upon them were portrayed hunting scenes—the chase of the leopard and the lion” (*A Handbook of Ancient History in Bible Light*).

King Cyrus stepped onto the scene in 539 B.C.E. and attempted the impossible: He wanted to conquer Babylon. His strategy was brilliant and simple. First, he dug trenches to divert the water from the Euphrates into a large reservoir. Once the water level had dropped, his soldiers marched, under the cover of darkness, up the river and under Babylon’s giant gates.

His soldiers had infiltrated the outer gates, but there were still the internal brass and iron gates. If these couldn’t be penetrated, the riverbed would become a kill box. Persia’s warriors would be sitting ducks as Babylonian spears and arrows rained down on them.

But strangely, on the night of the invasion, there were no soldiers and Babylon’s internal gates were *wide open*. King Nabonidus, his son Belshazzar, the imperial guard, the soldiers and many of the people of Babylon were partying. Consumed with drinking and games, they had failed to close the gates and to station guards. Having quenched the Euphrates and penetrated the outer gates, the Persian soldiers practically strolled into Babylon, taking the city—including the shocked king—by surprise.

It was a magnificent victory, some have even called it miraculous, that was recorded by several ancient historians, including Herodotus and Xenophon. Modern historians, using Babylonian archaeology and cuneiform documents, try to understand the details of Babylon’s sudden fall. However it happened *exactly*, Babylon and the *entire Babylonian Empire* now belonged to King Cyrus of Persia.



Cyrus the Humanitarian

In 1879, British archaeologists digging in Iran discovered a barrel-shaped cylinder made from clay. Inscribed on the cylinder in ancient cuneiform was a decree by King Cyrus of Persia. In the 40-line decree, the king recalled his defeat of Babylon and clearly outlined a number of policies that, much to everyone's surprise, *protected the rights of the conquered*.

This incredible artifact, called the Cyrus Cylinder, is on display in the British Museum. This cylinder confirms the historical records showing that King Cyrus displayed a tremendous and unprecedented respect and tolerance for the religion and customs of the peoples he conquered. The United Nations calls the Cyrus Cylinder the “world's first charter of human rights.”

King Cyrus's greatest and most famous humanitarian act was releasing the captive Jews in Babylon and allowing them to return to Judah to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. This decision by Cyrus is well documented by Greek and Roman historians, as well as by Josephus. The Cyrus Cylinder essentially parallels Cyrus's decree to release the Jews, a fact widely accepted by scholars.

King Cyrus issued his decree releasing the Jews in 538 B.C.E., about a year after he conquered Babylon. Zerubbabel, a leading Jewish figure in Babylon at the time, was responsible for mustering the party and leading it back to Jerusalem. Upon returning to

Israel's capital, Zerubbabel and his supporters rebuilt Solomon's temple. One of the most astonishing features about this decree is that there was no cost or price to the Jews. In fact, the king of Persia *financed* the Jews' return to their homeland, their reconstruction of the temple, and their reconstruction of Jerusalem!

Any historian will agree: Such magnanimity and benevolence from a man with supreme power is extremely rare! Cyrus the Great was truly an anomaly among world leaders.

Biblical History

All of this history is well documented by secular historians and archaeological evidence. It's also recorded in detail in the Bible. Ezra 1:1-4, for example, records Cyrus's decree releasing the Jews so they could return to Jerusalem. These scriptures in Ezra were recorded several decades after the event. 2 Chronicles 36, written after Cyrus was on the scene, also document the reign of King Cyrus.

Then there's the passage in Isaiah 44, which also discusses Cyrus the Great. This is where the history gets especially interesting. Verse 28 reads: “[God] saith of Cyrus: ‘He is My shepherd, And shall perform all My pleasure’; Even saying of Jerusalem: ‘She shall be built’; And to the temple: ‘My foundation shall be laid.’” Isaiah appears to be writing about how King Cyrus would be an instrument in God's hands (“My shepherd”), and explains that God would inspire Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

The thought continues in Isaiah 45:1: “Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, To subdue nations before him, And to loose the loins of kings; To open the doors before him, And that the gates may not be shut.” Here, Isaiah is saying that God would empower King Cyrus, even helping him “subdue nations” and conquer vast swathes of territory.

The narrative in verse 2 is even more specific: “I will go before thee, And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, And cut in sunder the bars of iron.” This is clearly discussing King Cyrus's conquest of Babylon. Notice, Isaiah refers Cyrus rupturing the “doors of brass” and “bars of iron.”

While Isaiah's account is similar to those in Ezra and 2 Chronicles, there is one noteworthy difference. The book of Isaiah was written about 150 years *before* Cyrus the Great was born.





The Jewish people rejoicing on their return from captivity and on their laying the foundation of the second temple

According to the original theory, the book of Isaiah was compiled into a single book around 70 B.C.E.

But a copy of the entire book of Isaiah, including chapters 44 and 45, was discovered as part of the Dead Sea Scrolls. And these scrolls were dated to around 200 B.C.E., proving that the entire book was completed well before 70 B.C.E. (For more evidence of Isaiah's early authorship, visit ArmstrongInstitute.org/89.)

Consider too: Josephus recorded that King Cyrus actually read this prophecy about himself in the book of Isaiah: "This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies This was foretold by Isaiah 140 years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this

Is it possible? Was King Cyrus, his rise to power, his defeat of Babylon, his humanitarian legacy, his name—even Babylon's gates of iron and brass—prophesied about 150 years before Cyrus's birth?

The reader will have to research this question further, studying into the remarkable parallels between the biblical text and the secular records. How do we know when Isaiah was written and that it was long before Cyrus arrived on the scene? Isaiah 1:1 says: "The Vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."

This verse clearly says that Isaiah was alive and writing during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Biblical history and archaeology all clearly show these Judean kings reigning in the eighth century B.C.E. This is nowhere disputed. Bible commentaries agree that Isaiah was on the scene for about 50 years, roughly between 760 and 710 B.C.E. For example, Isaiah 38:1-8 show that he prophesied during the reign of King Hezekiah.

Over the last century, skeptics have claimed that the passage of scripture referring to King Cyrus must have been written *after* King Cyrus. The most prominent theory says that the book of Isaiah has multiple authors and that some parts of the book, mainly the latter chapters, were written much later than the first part of the book.

and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written ..." (*Antiquities of the Jews* 11.1.2).

Of course, this raises the question: How did Cyrus learn about Isaiah's prophecy? The biblical text says that Daniel lived in Babylon and had an office in both the Babylonian and Persian royal courts. Daniel 5 shows that after Cyrus took Babylon and toppled the Babylonian Empire, Daniel became a high-ranking official in Cyrus's Medo-Persian Empire. Perhaps Daniel shared Isaiah's text with King Cyrus.

All Hail King Cyrus

Take some time to really think on this and to study Isaiah 44 and 45. The evidence is compelling. First, it's obvious that Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1-4 are talking about King Cyrus, who is mentioned by name. Next, consider Cyrus's relationship with Jerusalem. Isaiah 44:28 records Cyrus "Even saying of Jerusalem: 'She shall be built'; And to the temple: 'My foundation shall be laid.'" The temple in Jerusalem hadn't even been destroyed—and here Isaiah is prophesying that it would be rebuilt!

Verse 28 also explains the origins of Cyrus's humanitarianism. Cyrus treated all his conquered peoples much the same way as he treated the Jews. And he didn't just allow the Jews to practice their religion: He released them



Dead Sea Scrolls

STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF
GERALD FLURRY

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
STEPHEN FLURRY

MANAGING EDITOR
BRAD MACDONALD

SENIOR EDITOR
JOEL HILLIKER

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
NICHOLAS IRWIN

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
BRENT NAGTEGAAL
CHRISTOPHER EAMES
RYAN MALONE

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
GEORGE HADDAD
MIHAILO ZEKIC
SAMUEL MCKOY

PROOFREADERS
TERI BAILEY
DOTTE KIMES
AUBREY MERCADO

DESIGNERS
REESE ZOELLNER
STEVE HERCUS
KASSANDRA VERBOUT

ARTISTS
JULIA GODDARD
MELISSA BARREIRO
GARY DORNING

PRESS AND CIRCULATION
DEEPIKA AZARIAH

LET THE STONES SPEAK

May-June 2024, Vol. 3, No. 3 is published bimonthly by the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology. Address all communications to Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology; David Marcus 1, Jerusalem, 9223101, Israel.

How your subscription has been paid: *Let the Stones Speak* has no subscription price—it is free. This is made possible by donations freely given to the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation. Those who wish to voluntarily support this worldwide work are gladly welcomed as co-workers. © 2024 Armstrong International Cultural Foundation. Unless otherwise noted, scriptures are quoted from the *Jewish Publication Society of America of the Tanakh* version of the Bible.

CONTACT US

Please notify us of any change in your address; include your old mailing label and the new address. The publishers assume no responsibility for return of unsolicited artwork, photographs or manuscripts. The editor reserves the right to use any letters, in whole or in part, as he deems in the public interest, and to edit any letter for clarity or space. WEBSITE ArmstrongInstitute.org E-MAIL letters@ArmstrongInstitute.org; subscription or literature requests: request@ArmstrongInstitute.org PHONE Israel: 972-02-372-3591 MAIL Contributions, letters or requests may be sent to our office: David Marcus 1, Jerusalem, 9223101, Israel

from captivity, loaded them up with wealth and treasures, gave them letters of endorsement, and sent them home to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem! Surely this is one of the greatest humanitarian acts in history.

Isaiah 45:1 says Cyrus would “subdue nations before him.” As it happened, Cyrus conquered more than 15 different peoples—all the way from Egypt to Turkey to Central Asia to the Indus River.

Verse 1 also says God would “loose the loins of kings” before Cyrus. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* states: “The loose outer robe of the [kings], when girt fast around the loins, was the emblem of strength and preparedness for action; ungirt was indicative of feebleness [and weakness].” This is a perfect description of Nabonidus and Belshazzar on the night of Babylon’s fall.

Verse 1 also says God would “open the doors before him, And that the gates may not be shut.” The history of Babylon’s destruction shows that *the king of Babylon left some of the internal gates of the city open that night!* “In the revelry in Babylon on the night of its capture, the inner gates, leading from the streets to the river, were left open ... which, had they been kept shut, would have hemmed the invading hosts in the bed of the river, where the Babylonians could have easily destroyed them. Also, the gates of the palace were left open, so that there was access to every part of the city” (ibid).

In verse 2, Isaiah records, “And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, And cut in sunder the bars of iron.” The strongest doors in Babylon were made from brass and iron (a fact noted by Herodotus), yet as Isaiah forecast, they were not able to withstand the army of Cyrus!

God Reigns Supreme

One question hovers above King Cyrus and this passage in Isaiah. Why would God prophesy the life and accomplishments of a Persian king 150 years before his birth? The answer to that question is the theme of Isaiah 44-46.

In Isaiah 45:3, God says, “And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, And hidden riches of secret places, That thou mayest know that I am the Lord, *Who call thee by thy name*, even the God of Israel.” God makes the purpose of this prophecy abundantly clear: The life and work of King Cyrus prove the existence of God!

Cyrus himself understood this. “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah” (Ezra 1:2). This great king knew God existed, and he knew that God reigns supreme in the world of man. ■

FEEDBACK

“David and Solomon’s Monumental Kingdom” is itself a monumental contribution to the literature of this order—an exceptionally amazing intellectual effort that must find its way to every municipal and school library.

YEHUD-MONOSON, ISRAEL

Just wanted you to know that I have received the premier [exhibit] edition of *Let the Stones Speak*, and it is incredible. A couple weeks later I received the first issue with the cover asking the question: “Is This Moses?” I read this article right away. It is mind-blowing! Everything seems to fit perfectly about who Moses really was.

PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES

I am a high school history teacher in a little town called Inuvik, in the Arctic, in Canada. I am originally from Jerusalem. I stumbled upon your organization and magazine a month or two ago through a YouTube video; I received the issue about the Davidic and Solomonic eras and was extremely impressed.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, CANADA

I received *Let the Stones Speak* and saw on the back cover the advert for the “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” exhibit. **QUESTION:** Will this exhibit appear anywhere else besides in the Armstrong Auditorium in Oklahoma? For instance, will it appear in Israel?

MEROM HA’ GALIL, ISRAEL

RESPONSE: The exhibit will be stationed in Oklahoma till the end of January 2025. It is our hope that we will be able to then showcase the exhibit in Israel in the summer of next year.



לתת לאבנים לדבר - בעברית!

Our free 40-page, bimonthly magazine is now available in Hebrew. This showcase of Israel's biblical archaeology is published and distributed to you for free.

המגזין הדו-חודשי החינמי שלנו, בן 40 עמודים, זמין עכשיו בעברית. חלון הראווה של הארכיאולוגיה המקראית של ישראל מתפרסם ומופץ לכם בחינם.

ONLINE ArmstrongInstitute.org
E-MAIL letters@ArmstrongInstitute.org
MAIL David Marcus 1, Jerusalem, 9223101, Israel

NO CHARGE • NO FOLLOW-UP • NO OBLIGATION