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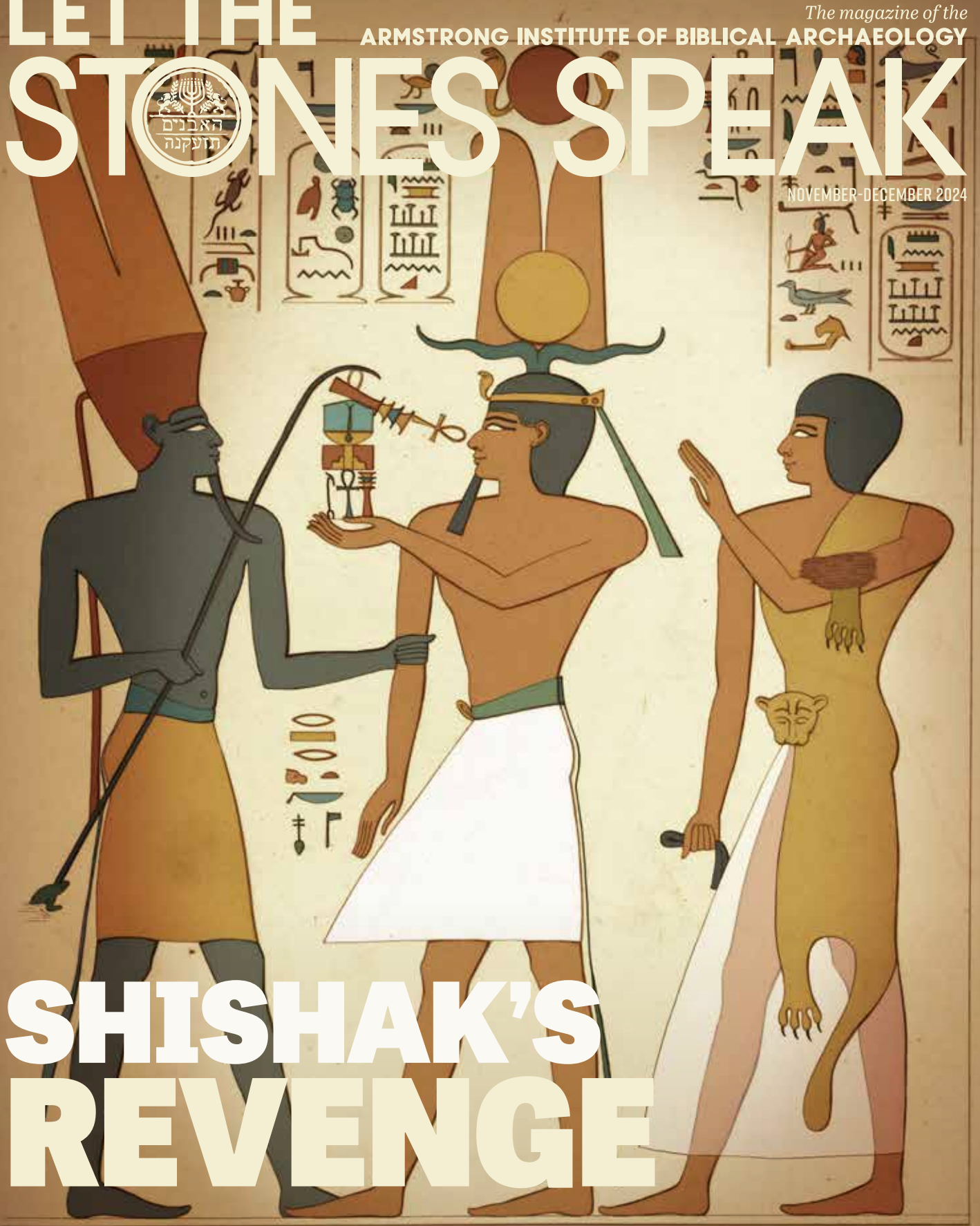
The magazine of the

STONES SPEAK



NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024

SHISHAK'S REVENGE



LET THE STONES SPEAK

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024 | VOL. 3, NO. 6 | CIRCULATION: 11,625

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PHILISTIA

Jordan River

Dead Sea

SYRIA

Israel

Samaria

Jerusalem

Judah

MOAB

EDOM



FROM THE EDITOR | GERALD FLURRY

The Archaeology of Israel's Disastrous Split

One of the most turbulent times in Israel's history—the division of the united kingdom—is confirmed in the archaeological record.

THE BIBLICAL TEXT SAYS THAT BEFORE KING Solomon died, a prophet told him the powerful kingdom he had built would be rent in two: “And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon: ‘Forasmuch as this hath been in thy mind, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, *I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant*” (1 Kings 11:9-11).

This is exactly what happened at the beginning of his son Rehoboam’s reign. The people requested that Rehoboam lower the burdensome taxes. Yet Rehoboam not only refused, he imposed harsher taxes, causing most of the people to revolt. When he sent Adoram, his chief tax collector, to deal with the problem, they stoned him to death. Rehoboam fled.

1 Kings 12:16 and 19 record, “And when all Israel saw that the king [Rehoboam] hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, ‘*What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; to your tents, O Israel; now see to thine own house, David.*’ So Israel departed unto their tents. ... So ISRAEL REBELLED AGAINST THE HOUSE OF DAVID, UNTO THIS DAY.”

Israel had a bad attitude about the *house of David*. The people were not just rebelling against Rehoboam, or against Judah or Jerusalem. *The great sin of the northern kingdom of Israel was their rebellion against the house of David!*

Ten of the 12 tribes of Israel then looked to Jeroboam as their king. God had handpicked Jeroboam. He had told him that if he would follow after God’s way and rule according to His laws, then He would establish him as “a sure house, as I built for David” (1 Kings 11:38). Jeroboam had every opportunity to succeed. He could have directed the people back to King David and his legacy. But he didn’t.

Once the northern 10 tribes rebelled, Jeroboam wanted to make sure they never returned to the house of David. He hated David’s legacy and was concerned that if the people continued to travel to Jerusalem to make sacrifices in the temple, they would return to Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:26-27).

Here is what Jeroboam did: “Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them: ‘Ye have gone up long enough to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of

the land of Egypt” (verse 28). This was the biggest lie he could have possibly told: that these golden calves were the gods that delivered Israel from Egypt! He was flagrantly rebelling against the omnipotent, all-powerful God! King Jeroboam even moved the keeping of God’s feast days to one month later (verse 32).

Where did this rebellion lead Israel? The nation never recovered. In the centuries that followed, the northern kingdom didn’t have even one righteous king. Eventually it was brutally conquered and lost its identity.

A lot of archaeological evidence attests to Israel under David and Solomon, what we call the united kingdom. We have written several articles on this topic, which have been published in this magazine and on our website (ArmstrongInstitute.org).

But did you know there is also clear, compelling archaeological evidence of the religious revolution that occurred under King Jeroboam, as well as the disastrous split in the kingdom?

In “The Man ‘Who Made Israel to Sin’” on page 20, Nicholas

Irwin summarizes the archaeological evidence confirming the biblical record of Jeroboam.

The chronicle of those northern 10 tribes that departed from David’s throne is absolutely terrible. It is filled with tragedy of every stripe, brutal politics, usurping and murder. It vividly shows the consequences of disloyalty to God’s throne! Rehoboam, for his part, also made terrible mistakes in his reign over the southern kingdom. He was not a good king (1 Kings 14:23-24).

As a result, in the fifth year of Rehoboam’s reign, Pharaoh Shishak invaded the southern kingdom of Judah. There is significant archaeological evidence of this invasion, as explained in our cover story “The Egyptian Empire Strikes Back: Evidence of Shishak’s Invasion of Judah,” by Christopher Eames.

Unlike the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom *did* have some righteous kings. Those who followed in the footsteps of King David and looked to God were the most successful.

The late 10th century B.C.E. was a critical period in Israel’s history. The nation was going through its biggest change: transitioning from a united, powerful kingdom into a divided, turbulent rebel nation and a weakened rump state. Some of the articles in this issue explore this period in Israel’s history and provide the archaeological context. I hope you find it an interesting and exciting study. ■





The Bubastite
Portal at Karnak

THE EGYPTIAN EMPIRE STRIKES BACK:

EVIDENCE OF SHISHAK'S INVASION OF JUDAH

Archaeology corroborates the invasion of the earliest pharaoh named in the biblical account.

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

IN A NUMBER OF CASES, ARCHAEOLOGY has unveiled and corroborated entire biblical stories. One example is the Babylonian invasion of Judah: Excavations have revealed citywide, fiery destruction in Jerusalem dating to the early sixth century B.C.E.; bullae belonging to the biblical princes Jehucal and Gedaliah, enemies of the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38:1); a tablet documenting the rations given to the captive King Jehoiachin (2 Kings 25:27-30); and another tablet documenting Nebuchadnezzar's installment of the final king, Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17).

Another example from more than a century earlier is Sennacherib's invasion of Judah at the end of the eighth century B.C.E. Region-wide Assyrian destruction has been found all across ancient sites in Judah—notably at



Judah's "second city," Lachish (2 Kings 18:14)—but most notably *not* at the capital, Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:32-36). Archaeological discoveries have corroborated the names of key individuals in the account: Sennacherib, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Eliakim, Hilkiah and Shebna (as recorded on Sennacherib's inscriptions, as well as on a number of bullae and other inscriptions). Other key elements in the story have also been confirmed, such as Hezekiah's payment of 30 talents of gold (2 Kings 18:13; recorded on Sennacherib's Winged Bull Inscription) and his precautionary construction of a new water system (2 Kings 20:20; the Siloam Tunnel).

There is yet another such example, albeit comparatively less well-known, from more than two centuries earlier; this one featuring the earliest directly named pharaoh in the biblical account. It's a violent epoch for which archaeology has remarkably corroborated the biblical account, but it is also one with a remaining degree of mystery and intrigue. It's an event that even survives in popular culture today,

serving as the plot premise to the popular Indiana Jones film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

In this article, we'll review the evidence for Pharaoh Shishak's invasion of Israel and Judah in the late 10th century B.C.E.

Setting the Scene

"... Thus saith the Lord: Ye have forsaken Me, therefore have I also left you in the hand of *Shishak*" (2 Chronicles 12:5). These were the terrifying words the Prophet Shemaiah issued to King Rehoboam during the early part of his reign.

Rehoboam, the son and successor of King Solomon, had a 17-year reign that is generally dated to circa 931–914 B.C.E. (see ArmstrongInstitute.org/685). He is accounted in the Bible as a rebellious, rash and reactionary ruler; during his reign, the united kingdom of Israel fell apart almost immediately. Following Rehoboam's refusal to lower taxes, the northern 10 tribes united around Solomon's former superintendent Jeroboam, with Rehoboam narrowly avoiding assassination (1 Kings 12:14-20).

On the throne of Egypt at this time was a pharaoh by the name of Shoshenq I (also rendered as Sheshonq/Shashank/Sheshonk). Shoshenq, who ruled circa 945–924 B.C.E., was a Libyan, not a native Egyptian, thus his dynasty is sometimes referred to as the "Libyan Dynasty." This was during Egypt's centuries-long Third Intermediate Period, a time of overall fragmentation and division in which Egypt was variously ruled by non-native pharaohs (i.e. Libyans and Kushites and, in some cases, a number of pharaohs at a time).

The name and dating for Shoshenq I is a remarkable fit with our biblical Pharaoh Shishak. (The slight spelling difference in the names is actually less obvious when comparing the Egyptian with the Hebrew; see sidebar, page 5.) For these reasons, scholars are nearly unanimous—both minimalists and maximalists alike—in identifying these individuals as one and the same. (There is a caveat to this; see sidebar, page 8.)

Egyptologist Prof. Kenneth Kitchen notes that "the dates of Shoshenq I (ca. 945–924) fit the dates for Rehoboam (ca. 931–914)." But that's not all: The chronology matches up even more tightly in relation to his invasion occurring in Rehoboam's "fifth year" (2 Chronicles 12:2). "Even more closely, Shoshenq I's unfinished works in celebration of his victory date to his Year 21 onward (Silsila stela, that year; ca. 925), setting his campaign in Years 19 or 20 (927f. or 926f.), while the fifth year of Rehoboam is about 926/925 also. THE EGYPTIAN AND HEBREW DATES SERIES ARE INDEPENDENT OF EACH OTHER, BUT MATCH VERY WELL" (*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*; emphasis added throughout).

This Egyptian ruler is mentioned by name seven times in the biblical account, primarily in relation to Rehoboam. But interactions with this king are *not* the earliest mention of this pharaoh: He is actually first introduced in the context of *Solomon's* kingdom.

"Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto *Shishak king of Egypt*, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:40). 1 Kings 11 describes Solomon's collapse into idolatry, womanizing and excess. As a result, God "raised up adversaries" to trouble him—one of whom was Jeroboam, an individual Ahijah the prophet declared would wrest control of the northern tribes from Solomon's dynasty (verse 31).

Chronologically speaking, Jeroboam's fleeing to Shishak in Egypt also serves as additional corroboration for the identity of the biblical Shishak as Shoshenq I, whose first 14 years on the throne overlapped with the last 14 years of Solomon's reign.

Another such "adversary" who initially sought refuge in Egypt was Hadad of Edom (verse 17). Why was

such safe haven and favor afforded these enemies of Solomon by the ruler of Egypt? The logical answer is that Solomon's broad and expansive kingdom exerted full control over the crucial regional trade routes running between Egyptian, Hittite and Mesopotamian lands. These routes included the coastal Via Maris and overland Via Regis, the passages across both of which were evidently taxed by Solomon (e.g. 1 Kings 10:29; Ezra 4:20). The rulers of Egypt during the reigns of David and Solomon (except probably Pharaoh Siamun, father-in-law of Solomon; see *ArmstrongInstitute.org/1022*) would have been biding their time, only too

happy to support "enemies" who would ultimately weaken and fracture the Israelite kingdom, making it easy pickings for a time of eventual Egyptian resurgence.

That time came during the early years of the reign of King Rehoboam.

Pharaoh's Onslaught

Shoshenq I rose to power as a military leader during the final years of Egypt's 21st Dynasty, eventually taking the throne and establishing a new dynasty of his own—the 22nd Dynasty. This dynasty would continue for well over 200 years (943–716 B.C.E.), becoming one of the longest-lasting dynasties in Egyptian history. Four other pharaohs in the dynasty would go on to bear his name. But it was not until right at the end of his reign that he invaded the Levant.

"And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam [circa 926–925 B.C.E.] that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had dealt treacherously with the Lord, with twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen; and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubim, the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fortified cities which pertained to Judah, and came unto Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 12:2-4). That Shoshenq's forces included Libyans ("Lubim") would not be unusual, given the pharaoh was a Libyan himself. More interesting is the biblical reference to "Sukkiyim, or scouts, Libyan auxiliaries known in Egyptian texts from the 13th/12th centuries onward, an intimate detail that we owe exclusively to the chronicler and his (nonbiblical) sources," writes Kitchen (ibid).

A remarkable Egyptian account of this invasion exists today.

Deep in the south of Egypt at the vast and impressive Karnak Temple in Luxor is a 20-foot-high temple gate known as the "Bubastite Portal" (named after the Delta city of Bubastis). The right-hand side of the gate's main facade is adorned with inscriptions commemorating Shoshenq's invasion into the Levant. Decorating the top are images of Shoshenq's opponents being trampled upon by horses and chariots (befitting the description in 1 Chronicles 12).



On the right of this particular relief is a colossal image of Shoshenq I smiting his enemies. To his left is a smaller (yet still large) image of the god Amun, leading by rope multiple ordered rows of individuals to be smashed by the smiting pharaoh. In front of each of these individuals is an oval shape known as a “cartouche,” or name ring, bearing a hieroglyphic inscription. These represent the individual names of the towns and cities captured by Shoshenq I.

Many of the cartouches have been weathered and damaged beyond legibility; still, a majority can be read, revealing many familiar locations from the biblical account, such as Aijalon, Gibeon, Megiddo, Socoh and Arad. One of the most intriguing place-names references “the Field of Abram” (which is broadly identified as the earliest extrabiblical reference to the name of the biblical patriarch). These neatly ordered rows of cartouche names reveal that Shoshenq I’s path of conquest took him nearly as far as the Sea of Galilee in the north and down into the Negev desert in the south (see map, page 4).

Many scholars regard this vast set of cartouches (originally 156) as a sort of “itinerary”—a road map of Shoshenq I’s invasion. To that end, the layout of the cartouches is divided into various main parts: an initial row, naming the “Nine Bows,” or traditional enemies of Egypt; followed by an upper register of five rows containing place-names of cities and towns in central and northern Judah and Israel; below, another register of five rows containing place-names in the south of Judah

and Edomite territory (the Negev desert regions); and finally, a completely separated group of some 30 cartouches on the bottom right of the Bubastite Portal, very few of which are legible.

In simplest summary, it appears that Shoshenq I’s vast army split into two parts when it arrived in Judah—one part carving a path toward the north, and one part toward the south (likely with aims toward controlling the southern copper mining industry and trade routes in this area).

Over the decades, scholars have attempted to make sense of the order of the individual cartouches on the Bubastite Portal, believing them to be in some kind of logical, progressive arrangement. “The problem is that there seem to be significant gaps,” wrote Prof. Yigal Levin in his article “Did Pharaoh Sheshonq Attack Jerusalem?” “[T]hey don’t connect into a reasonable itinerary.

“In 1957, Israeli scholar Benjamin Mazar published what he considered to be a solution to this problem: the upper register was written in *boustrophedon* style [‘as the ox plows’—reading across in one direction, then down, and across in the other direction] Mazar’s proposal was accepted enthusiastically by some scholars, but rejected out of hand by others.

“The main problem is that while *boustrophedon* writing was fairly common in archaic Greek texts and in Luwian hieroglyphic writings, it is almost unheard of in Egyptian hieroglyphic texts. Moreover, the convention in Egyptian is that the ‘figures’ above each name-ring

‘SHOSHENQ’ AS SHISHAK

THERE IS AN OBVIOUS, albeit slight, difference in the names Shoshenq and Shishak. This is seen in the biblical lack of the *n* consonant for this name. The Bible’s שישק would, with the addition of this consonant, be rendered שישנק.

Note that the vowels are variable. Both Hebrew and Egyptian are consonantal languages, hence various acceptable spellings for both Shoshenq or Sheshonq; there is even a variant of the biblical Shishak as *Shoshak* or *Shushak*. Also note that the final *k* and *q* are equivalent letters. In fact, this

biblical *k* is technically better transliterated as *q*—for it is from this particular Hebrew-Phoenician letter that our own *q* derives. For these reasons, Prof. Kenneth Kitchen prefers to render the biblical name Shishak as Shushaq (*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*).

The only real difference between the names is this biblical lack of the consonant *n*. When comparing the Egyptian and Hebrew texts, we essentially have the difference between *Sh-sh-n-q* and *Sh-sh-q*. Is this problematic?

Not at all. The *n* is what is known as a “weak consonant,” and it is

not unusual for it to be dropped. Examples include the Hebrew *Gat* (biblical Gath) as the Egyptian *Gint(i)*; the Hebrew *Makedah* as *Manqedah* in Aramaic; possibly also the Hebrew *Put* as the Egyptian *Punt*.

And while “Shoshenq” is the generally given Egyptian name for this king, some contemporary Egyptian monuments render his name without the consonant *n*. “These monumental inscriptions (dated to year 21 of Shoshenq’s reign) demonstrate ššq was an officially accepted variation,” wrote Gavin Cox (“Strengthening the Shishak/Shoshenq Synchrony,” 2022). ■



are drawn facing the beginning of the line, and in the Sheshonq inscription all of the figures in all of the rows are facing to the right.

“So the bottom line is, we just don’t have enough data to reconstruct Sheshonq’s exact itinerary” (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, July-August 2012). Debate about the exact itinerary aside, however, we do have an impressive array of places that Shoshenq I did conquer.

Sites Destroyed—and Not Destroyed?

Excavations at a number of these sites have revealed fiery destructions dating to this very period. A case in point is a particularly large destruction event that took place at the major city of Megiddo. Alongside the destroyed stratum, a victory stele fragment was found at the site in 1925, during the excavations led by German archaeologist Gottlieb Schumacher. The fragment bore the name of Shoshenq I, clearly part of a triumphant victory stone set up at the site to commemorate his victory there.

An interesting sidenote to this Megiddo stele discovery is that many early scholars had wondered if Shoshenq I really did undertake this campaign into the Levant, or if his Bubastite Portal inscription just copied these names from elsewhere, attributing to himself an ultimately made-up campaign. This was a theory promoted by the infamous German orientalist Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), one of the key originators of the Documentary Hypothesis (a popular minimalist theory for the very late formulation/fictionalization of the Hebrew Bible).

The discovery of Shoshenq’s stele at Megiddo, matching the Megiddo cartouche on the Bubastite Portal, ultimately

was sufficient to put down such theories of a “faked” campaign. The late biblical geographer Prof. Anson Rainey wrote: “This inscription can only be based on intelligence information gathered during a real campaign by Pharaoh Shoshenq” (*The Sacred Bridge: Carta’s Atlas of the Biblical World*, 2006).

We have, then, sites bearing destruction layers dating to Shoshenq’s invasion. Yet for many of the sites mentioned on the Bubastite Portal, we do *not* have destruction layers—including at such important sites as Arad and Beersheba in the Judean south, and Rehov in the north. How can this be explained?

The explanation was already given some 2,000 years ago by the first-century C.E. Jewish historian Josephus: “But God sent Shishak, king of Egypt, to punish them for their unjust behavior towards Him Now therefore when he fell upon the country of the Hebrews, he took the strongest cities of Rehoboam’s kingdom *without fighting*; and when he had put garrisons in them, he came last of all to Jerusalem” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 8.10.2). A significant number of these cities had simply surrendered before the might of Shoshenq I’s forces.

But now, in the words of Josephus, we come “last of all to Jerusalem”—the biggest mystery of them all.

What About Jerusalem?

“Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said: ‘The Lord is righteous.’ And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying: ‘They have humbled themselves; *I will not destroy them*; but I will grant them some deliverance, and *My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak*. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries” (2 Chronicles 12:6-8).

And just as with the sparing of Jerusalem during Sennacherib’s eighth-century B.C.E. invasion of Judah, there is likewise *no late 10th-century, Shoshenq I period destruction found in Jerusalem*.

But there is also no mention of Jerusalem on the Bubastite Portal. How could this be? After all, Jerusalem is the one key city mentioned in the biblical account of Shishak’s invasion.

This has been a major point of debate for the past two centuries. The very first individual to translate

the cartouches on the Bubastite Portal—the very individual credited with deciphering hieroglyphic script in the first place, Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832)—believed he *had* indeed found the reference to Jerusalem. One of the cartouches read *ydhmlk*—thus interpreted by him as *yd hmlk*, “Kingdom of the Jews.”

This would be a rather odd rendition of the word, however; in the century since, this cartouche was reinterpreted as instead reading *yd hmlk*, referring to a northern place-name, Yad Hamelekh (“Hand of the King”).

Another cartouche translated by Kitchen reads “Heights of David.”

Could this perhaps refer to Jerusalem, the City of David, perched atop the Judean highlands? Unlikely. Kitchen himself does not believe this to be so; this cartouche is grouped together with those of the Negev regions (a location, ironically, in which David sought refuge from Saul—befitting the regional name). Furthermore, the proper name of Jerusalem *is* known in earlier Egyptian texts and correspondence, so there would have been no reason to refer to it by a different name.

So why is there no mention of this key capital city on Shoshenq’s wall relief?

A relatively common answer is that Jerusalem was not destroyed by the pharaoh, so it was not recorded on the list. But this seems unlikely: As noted, other cities were also not destroyed yet are attested to on the portal.

Probably the best answer is the simplest: A full third of the names on this list are illegible. It is more than likely that the name of Jerusalem *was* contained in a now-unreadable part of the inscription.

Some (such as David Rohl—see sidebar “Was Ramesses II Shishak?”) have argued that the cartouches referencing cities in the geographic region of Jerusalem *are* readable, and there is no mention of the capital in this part of the inscription. Yet despite attempts to map the pharaoh’s city-to-city itinerary, there are issues in reconstructing a layout, and notably there is no real knowledge about the route Shoshenq took in returning to Egypt—for as Josephus indicated, it is on this *return* journey that Shishak finally stopped at Jerusalem to plunder the city. This would certainly be logical in order to transport the wealth back into Egypt, rather than carry it with them, along their campaign up into northern Israel.



Megiddo Stele fragment



Points of Contention

There are other points of contention sometimes raised about Shoshenq’s invasion. One is why such a large amount of site names from the northern kingdom of Israel are included on the Bubastite Portal. Doesn’t the Bible emphasize this as an invasion event in relation to Judah? This is readily answered by the biblical account at this point in time being focused primarily on *Jerusalem* and *Judah* (especially in the case of the chronicler, who relays the most detail about Shishak). It is an example of how the biblical authors often present a Jerusalem-based perspective of events.

2 Chronicles 12:4 does indeed state that Shishak “took the fortified cities which pertained to Judah.” But the Bible does not say that it was *only* Judah that was afflicted by this invasion. Intriguingly, it also relays the distress and repentance of “the princes of *Israel*” (verse 6)—implying that the northern kingdom of Israel *was* under duress at this time as well. (Furthermore, the emphasis on these *princes* of Israel, rather than King Jeroboam, could imply a still-fractured conglomerate of tribes in the north, not yet fully organized behind the new breakaway king.)

But what about Jeroboam or Rehoboam? Judah or Israel? Couldn’t Egypt’s artificers have taken time to inscribe *any* of these names on the Bubastite Portal?

Professor Kitchen isn’t bothered by such questions: “So this great list does not mention either a Rehoboam or a Jeroboam, or the ‘state names’ of Judah or Israel; *that was never done in such long town lists. ... [E]xactly* like all his New Kingdom predecessors, Shoshenq I did not deign to name his adversaries, and long, detailed topographical lists like his and theirs almost never name

states, just series of settlements. So no mention of the names Judah, Israel, Rehoboam, Jeroboam was ever to be expected in his normal-type list that we do possess

“What we *do* have is several series of names of places known in both Judah and Israel, from which Shoshenq’s course of campaign can be discerned. This is valuable, in that it shows that Shoshenq I chose not only to cow and loot Rehoboam of Judah, but also to bring his former protégé Jeroboam of Israel to heel. It may well be (a touch of speculation, for a moment!) that Shoshenq’s price tag for helping Jeroboam into power in 931 was that Jeroboam should thereafter pay him tribute as a vassal. It would only need Jeroboam to default on his payment to bring the redoubtable pharaoh down upon him, and to lay hands on Judah’s rumored wealth for good measure.”

Let’s take a step back and observe what we do have in the round. We have a pharaoh, bearing a parallel name to that of the biblical Shishak, on the scene at the very same time—the last part of Solomon’s reign to the first part of Rehoboam’s. We see him initiate an invasion of

the southern Levant, right at the same time—circa 926–925 B.C.E.—conquering a large number of cities in Judah (paralleling 2 Chronicles 12:4), as well as Israel (verse 6). And perhaps most extraordinarily: Just as described in verse 7, we see *no corresponding destruction layer at the most important Judean city of all*. Just as promised, we see Jerusalem spared from catastrophe.

But that’s not the end of the story. Because as the passage continues to describe, the wealth of the city *was* plundered. And if anything is proof of Egypt’s contact with Jerusalem at this time, it is this: *a sudden and colossal influx of gold and silver*.

Solomon’s Gold

“So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king’s house; he took all away; he took away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made” (2 Chronicles 12:9). The amount of gold adorning Solomon’s temple is legendary. Various monetary estimates, based on the quantities described in the

WAS RAMESSES II SHISHAK?

THE IDENTITY OF THE BIBLICAL Shishak as Pharaoh Shoshenq I is accepted by scholars with near-unanimity. There is a variant theory, however—that of Egyptologist David Rohl—that identifies Shishak as Ramesses II. This will be mentioned here only due to a level of popularity of the theory in the public circle, particularly with its promotion in the *Patterns of Evidence* documentary series.

Rohl proposes a unique “New Chronology” that dramatically down-dates Egyptian history of this period by roughly 300 years, putting Ramesses II on the scene during the 10th century B.C.E. (as opposed to the 13th century B.C.E.). It is a chronological scheme that, unsurprisingly, has not been well received in scholarship, with few adherents in academia.

Identifying Ramesses II as Shishak is not just a function of

Rohl’s New Chronology—it is a very reason for it.

Rohl justifies this identification based on the apparent differences of the names *Shoshenq* and *Shishak*, the lack of mention of Jerusalem on the Bubastite Portal, and the comparatively fewer Judahite cities mentioned in general (as opposed to northern Israelite cities)—something he deems odd, based on his opinion of an alliance between Egypt and Jeroboam’s Israel.

Rohl instead notes a transliteration of the name of Ramesses II in Hittite correspondence—*Riyamashisha*—and in turn a “nickname” of this king found in Levantine documentation, as “Shisha” (with the equivalent Egyptian nickname given as *Sysw*). Rohl argues that the Egyptian letter *w* ending this name could be mistaken for the Hebrew letter “k,” thus leading to a later scribal reading as “Shishak.” He then

points to a description of Israel’s destruction on the Merneptah Stele (dating to the reign of Ramesses’s successor, Merneptah), which says: “Israel is laid waste; its seed is no more”—associating this with the invasion. (This abbreviated explanation is expounded upon by Rohl in a number of his books, such as *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest*, and presentations, such as “Exodus—Myth or History? With David Rohl.”)

Objectively, it’s a convoluted case. Does it hold water?

Egyptologist Dr. David Falk notes the fragility of Rohl’s assertion as a basis for completely upending Egyptian chronology. “Unfortunately, Rohl has distorted several facts to make this hypothetical conversion work,” he says. “If Jewish scribes changed the last letter of *Ššw* to *Ššk*, why is this somehow more reasonable to *Ššnk*, dropping the letter *n* to make

biblical account, run easily into the billions. As for silver, it “was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon” (2 Chronicles 9:20). Many who read such accounts of the wealth and splendor of Solomon’s reign and his temple look sideways at the description of such opulence.

Just “legend,” though? Perhaps not.

From Shoshenq himself, we hear little else. He dies soon after his invasion of the Levant. But during the first years of the reign of his son and successor, Osorkon I, we suddenly see the new king lavishing temples all around Egypt in extraordinary quantities of silver and gold; this is attested to on a granite pillar inscription at the Delta site of Bubastis.

“Osorkon I gifted some 383 tons of gold and silver to the gods and temples of Egypt in the first four years of his reign, many of the detailed amounts being listed in a long inscription (now damaged),” writes Kitchen. “That sum would (in weight) be equivalent to almost 17 years of Solomon’s annual gold revenue, and perhaps to 10 years of it in gold value (not to mention such ‘minor’ items as gold shields, etc)” (ibid).

Where did such extraordinary wealth suddenly come from? It surely didn’t come from any extraordinary deeds of this new pharaoh. “No other pharaonic text *remotely* approaches this scale of expenditure of precious metal,” Kitchen writes.

Could such vast quantities of wealth have been derived from an *already attested event* in the biblical account—one that took place in the few years prior, during the reign of Shishak/Shoshenq—the total plunder of Jerusalem’s extraordinary gold reserves?

You decide.

With the wealth of Judah and Israel depleted, certain cities in smoldering ruins, and others subjugated, the stage was set for the beginning of the divided kingdom. “Sheshonq’s campaign in Israel and Judah brought an end to the many architectural, military and political achievements of the united monarchy of David and Solomon and ushered in a new age—that of the nation divided,” concludes Professor Levin (op cit).

The prophets Shemaiah and Ahijah couldn’t have said it better themselves. ■

Ššk? ... Rohl cannot object to one letter out of place, then change three others [in order to complete his full conversion of the name of this pharaoh]. ...

“Unlike Hittite, which only has a letter š [the “sh” sound], but no s, Hebrew has both the letter s and š. Enough vocabulary was borrowed from Egyptian into Hebrew that we know that Hebrew converted the Egyptian s into Hebrew s, and not to the letter š. The name Ramesses, with its letter s, is attested in Hebrew—*five times in the Pentateuch* [Genesis 47:11; Exodus 1:11; 12:37; Numbers 33:3, 5]. And in no way does this work undergo Rohl’s hypothetical conversion [into this ‘nickname’].

“There is simply no way that Ramesses II was the biblical Shishak. We aren’t just dealing with the dates for Ramesses II and Sheshonq I, but also all the associated biographies. Each king was associated with *hundreds* of

officials and courtiers” (video, “Patterns of Evidence, Part 3: Was Ramesses II the Biblical Shishak?”). Thus, *all* such synchronisms, particularly with rulers all around the ancient Near East (Assyria, Babylonia, etc), would have to be somehow reinterpreted, redated and reassigned.

This is something hinted at by Rohl in his book, *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest*: “I readily admit that the subject of Mesopotamian chronology lies outside my competence. As a matter of policy, I have therefore decided, at this stage, to avoid opening up a ‘second front’ in the chronology. ... A revised Mesopotamian chronology will have to wait for a while, and then may require the attentions of other, more competent scholars to put together a new model.”

Despite a relatively popular public reception of Rohl’s New

Chronology—not dissimilar to the popular reception of the older chronological theories of philosopher Immanuel Velikovsky, who sought to shift Egyptian history by 600 years (putting Ramesses II on the scene at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction in the early *sixth* century B.C.E. and putting Thutmose III as biblical Shishak)—it is our opinion that Rohl’s New Chronology produces many more questions, contradictions and controversies than it purports to solve.

After all, as covered in the preceding article, as far as Shoshenq I goes—we *already* have a pharaoh, of virtually identical name, reigning at exactly the same period, initiating a campaign at exactly the same time prescribed in the biblical account, into exactly the same territories of the southern Levant. Certain questions remain—but the parallelisms that do exist are, in a word, extraordinary. ■

The Sephardic Connection

How archaeology and
the biblical record
link the Holy Land
to ancient Spain

BY RYAN MALONE



“IN 1492, COLUMBUS SAILED THE OCEAN BLUE.” So went a little saying I learned as a child—conveniently rhyming in English so as to sear the date into memory. But 1492 was also a monumental year for Jews in Spain. In short, an edict issued by the Catholic-dominated government required the expulsion of tens of thousands of Jews from the territory. (New DNA evidence suggesting Columbus was of Jewish descent makes the year of his departure less of a coincidence.)

The Jewish connection to the Iberian Peninsula (modern-day Spain and Portugal) is well documented. The Jews there, also referred to as “Sephardic,” have a long history with the region.

Just *how* ancient this Jewish link to Spain is, is often relegated to “Jewish tradition.” But archaeology gives remarkable clues, further harmonizing with the biblical record. This harmony contains overtones that take us even beyond the western coasts of Spain.

A Reliable Record

Let’s consider first what is documented in the scriptural account.

By the mid-first century C.E., the link between the Holy Land and Spain is well established.

The Apostle Paul, a famous Jewish figure from the Christian Bible, told his Roman congregations of his intentions to visit them, stopping by on the way to Spain (Romans 15:24, 28). Saying, *I’ll visit you on my way to this other, farther-away place*, assigns a certain significance to that more distant place.

But even more is contained in the Hebrew Bible that shows a powerful link between these two regions. Reviewing these references before we consider the archaeology gives these artifacts the dramatic attention they deserve.

Though the word “Spain” appears twice in Paul’s epistles to the Romans (*spania* in Greek), its Hebrew equivalent only occurs in the book of Obadiah (Obadiah 1:20). It is transliterated *Sepharad* and is the undisputed origin of the “sephardic” designation. But this region is referred to in numerous other biblical passages under a different name.

Of Tarshish and Tyre

The Bible describes some extensive trade networks going both east and west from the Holy Land.

The major eastward port was found near modern-day Eilat—at “Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom” (1 Kings 9:26). The context here is Solomon’s eastern trading networks—particularly involving a place called Ophir (verse 28; also 2 Chronicles 8:17-18; 1 Kings 22:49). This place, and its famous gold,

was known in the time of Job (Job 22:24), King David (Psalm 45:10), and has been confirmed by archaeology (see ArmstrongInstitute.org/298).

When this port is mentioned in the reign of Jehoshaphat, its ships are referred to as the “ships of Tarshish” (1 Kings 22:49). 2 Chronicles 20:36-37 mention them going to Tarshish. These eastbound “ships of Tarshish” were probably how Solomon acquired his ivory, apes, peacocks and other precious resources (1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chronicles 9:10, 21).

There are far more references to a “Tarshish” in the west. The Bible mentions the launching points for this route: the Phoenician trading center of Tyre, located on the Mediterranean coast in northern Israel, and an Israelite port city south of that in Joppa. As there was no Suez Canal yet, ships sailing from these ports unequivocally went WEST through the Mediterranean Sea.

A well-known mention of this shipping path opens the famous Jonah account (early eighth century B.C.E.). When called to take a divine warning to Nineveh, Jonah “rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:3). Jonah’s destination is emphasized three times in Jonah 1:3, plus a restatement later (Jonah 4:2). The narrative suggests *regular* traffic was going to a well-known “Tarshish” to the west at this time (in the opposite direction of Nineveh, which was to the east).

Every indication from history and archaeology pegs this “Tarshish” as modern-day Spain. It was there, particularly in the southwest of this Iberian Peninsula, that a civilization developed that was known to historians like Herodotus (fifth century B.C.E.) as “Tartessos.” Its major trading center was beyond the “Pillars of Hercules” (i.e. Strait of Gibraltar) on the southern Atlantic side of the peninsula at the Gulf of Cadiz.

The region was known for being plenteous in wealth, particularly silver. In the sixth century B.C.E, Jeremiah credited Tarshish for Judah’s silver supply (Jeremiah 10:9).

Our magazine published an interview with marine archaeologist Sean Kingsley about this on May 22, 2022. We later published his article on this topic in our 2024 Exhibit Issue. Kingsley quotes Diodorus of Sicily, who linked Solomon’s Tarshish to Iberia in the *Bibliotheca Historica*. “The country has the most numerous and excellent silver mines,” Diodorus wrote. “The natives do not know how to use the metal. But the Phoenicians, experts in commerce, would buy this silver in exchange for other small goods. Consequently, taking the silver to Greece, Asia and all other peoples, the Phoenicians made good earnings.”

Kingsley also uses an artifact found in the ruins of Nora on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia to prove that “Tarshish was grounded in geographic reality.” The meter-tall limestone inscription contains an eight-line Phoenician dedication commemorating how, as Kingsley wrote, “after defeat in battle, a military force commanded by an officer called Milkûtôn escaped by ship to Sardinia from Tarshish, where his soldiers lived out a peaceful life. Tarshish, then, lay close to Sardinia in the early ninth century B.C.E. when this calling card was committed to stone.”

This was not long after the time of King Solomon, so it is no wonder that his biblical chronicler makes several references to Tarshish. Even his father, King David, referenced the area in Psalm 72.

Anciently an archipelago of three Spanish islands in the gulf of Cadiz were referred to by the mythical name “Hesperides,” or “Esperides,” from the Greek meaning “sunset” (perhaps suggesting a westward direction). The Greek historian Hesiod wrote around 700 B.C.E. that the area was north of Africa’s northwest coast, specifically north of its Atlas Mountains. This Greek word shares an etymological connection to the Hebrew word Obadiah used for Spain: Both share the consonants S-P-R-D.

These isles may be the ones referenced by David when addressing his son Solomon: “The kings of *Tarshish* AND OF THE ISLES shall render tribute ...” (Psalm 72:10). If not the “Hesperides,” perhaps these western isles are even British? Whatever the case, this shows the king had an intimate knowledge of these far-flung trading posts.

In the time of David and Solomon, it appears that trade to Tarshish went mainly through TYRE (to which

the great deal of Phoenician artifacts in Spain from that time period will attest). Tyre would ship goods to Israel by sending items down to its Joppa port (2 Chronicles 2:15), which was still a practice during the second temple’s construction (Ezra 3:7).

Tyre is a key to understanding the Holy Land’s link with ancient Spain. It was “planted in a pleasant place” (Hosea 9:13).

“And Tyre did build herself a stronghold, And heaped up *silver as the dust*, And *fine gold as the mire* of the streets” (Zechariah 9:3). This is remarkably similar to a passage about how common silver was in Solomon’s day. Tyre did this by building itself up as a “stronghold.” This is quite the wordplay to the Hebrew ear, since the word for Tyre (*tzor*) and the word for stronghold (*matzor*) sound almost identical.

This verse also makes a captivating connection in the materials mentioned: *kharutz* (rendered “fine gold”) and *kesef* (silver). In the Bible, silver is usually paired with *zahav* (gold), but this pairing of silver with *kharutz* is unique. And it just so happens that two other authors pair them: David does so in Psalm 68:14, and Solomon says these two materials pale in comparison to wisdom (Proverbs 3:14; 8:10, 19; 16:16). Solomon is likely speaking from practical trading experience, and this is yet another somewhat hidden reference to the trading relationship both Israelite kings shared with Tyre.

Tyre’s Hiram, David and Solomon

The Bible makes more overt references to Tyre’s relationship with David and Solomon.

Straddling both their reigns is a king of Tyre named Hiram (2 Chronicles 2:2), who provided cedar and labor



Phoenician script on the ninth-century B.C.E. Nora stele found in Sardinia refers to the land of Tarshish, proving its historical reality.





to build David’s palace (2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Chronicles 14:1). This trade alliance was probably even more significant when David began gathering materials for his son Solomon to build the temple.

Many of the materials David mentions would have been brokered through Tyre, and much of it came from the west. The biblical record suggests this happened toward the end of David’s life (1 Chronicles 22:5). In verse 14, he says “in my straits [often rendered ‘affliction’] I have prepared ...” and then lists specific materials—gold, silver, brass, iron, timber and stone—and their amounts.

There was a time when King David was compelled to retire from battle (2 Samuel 21:17). From this point until his final year of life, there is almost nothing in the Bible’s biography of him. It appears this is when he made his most concentrated effort to gather materials for Solomon’s construction of the temple.

1 Chronicles 29:1-5 give even more specifics about the materials David acquired. Verse 6 shows how the nobles also had much gold, silver, brass and iron themselves to donate to this building fund, indicating a rich market of these materials provided through extensive trade networks beyond their shores.

In verse 2, David mentions silver (likely from Tarshish). Iron wasn’t rare in the region, but “brass” here actually refers to bronze (an alloy of copper and tin, the latter of which would have come from the British

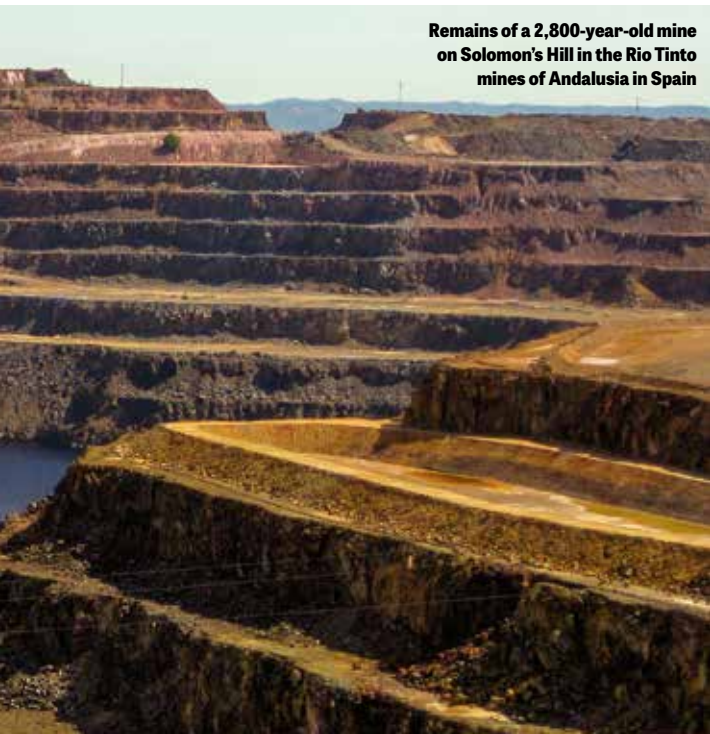
Isles through Gibraltar). “This is certainly consistent with the significant archaeological evidence—consistent with the Bible—of the extensive reach of David’s kingdom,” writes *Let the Stones Speak* editor in chief Gerald Flurry.

In verse 4, David mentions the “gold of Ophir” in this inventory, indicating he would have had some sort of eastern trade going. Perhaps David’s poetic statement of “As far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12) was even rooted in some understanding of how far ships had to go in either direction at the time to acquire these temple materials.

In 1 Chronicles 29, David uses phrases like “prepared with all my might,” “set my affection,” “I have a treasure of mine own of gold and silver ... over and above all that I have prepared.” He was personally invested in acquiring these materials. This doesn’t mean he personally traveled abroad to acquire them, but that is not out of the realm of possibility.

Solomon’s portion of the biblical account offers even more vivid details about Israel’s seafaring trade networks. This is also where archaeology begins to corroborate a link between his kingdom and Spain.

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Remains of a 2,800-year-old mine on Solomon’s Hill in the Rio Tinto mines of Andalusia in Spain



The bloodred waters of the Rio Tinto mines in Andalusia, Spain, the source of King Solomon and Hiram’s silver in the land of Tarshish

Solomon in Spain

A seemingly passing phrase from an elderly, reflective Solomon rings in this context: “I GATHERED me also silver and gold, and treasure such as kings and the provinces have as their own ...” (Ecclesiastes 2:8). The context here is about things he “made,” “acquired” or “got.” But here he “gathered” things—perhaps another nod to massive trade.

His mother’s wisdom, as recorded in Proverbs 31, likened a valiant wife to being like “the merchant-ships” bringing bread “from afar” (verse 14). This is a comparison that would have resonated with the powerful king.

Again, much of this trade would have been facilitated through Hiram’s Tyre (see 1 Kings 5:22, 24-25; 2 Chronicles 2:2-15). Hiram also sent workers, items of “burnished brass” and gold (1 Kings 5:32; 7:45; 9:11, 14; 2 Chronicles 4:11-16).

Hiram’s navy was itself an incomparable resource for Solomon because of its “knowledge of the sea” (1 Kings 9:27). He even sent his men on Solomon’s *eastward* expeditions (verse 28; 1 Kings 10:11). But the sheer fact that Solomon made silver as common as pavement (verse 27) bespeaks a *western* trading network—particularly Spain, which was rich in precious metals, gold and especially silver.

Thus we come to the first archaeological discovery to consider: a Solomonic-era mine discovered in Spain. Kingsley discussed this “massive silver extraction village” found near the Roman-period Rio Tinto mine, several miles upriver of the Mediterranean near Huelva. Ironically, this was the city from which Columbus planned his trip *in search of* Solomon’s gold (as immortalized by a giant statue of him there). The historic mine was still being referred to in the 1600s C.E. as “Cerro Solomon,” or Solomon’s Hill. Kingsley cited Signor A. Carranza who inscribed the mine as such on his map, noting also a landmark named “Solomon’s Castle.”

Kingsley wrote: “The memory of Solomon and ancient mining was alive and well in 1634 when Rodrigo Caro’s *Antiguedades y Principado de la Ilustrisima Ciudad de Sevilla* described how [t]he inhabitants of those parts have a tradition (so they say) that the people sent there by King Solomon for gold and silver built it [Zalamea la Vieja] and gave it the name Salamea. As proof of this they pointed out that a very old castle that is nearby has been called ever since that time the Old Castle of Solomon.”

Initial excavations at Huelva unearthed a bevy of Phoenician pottery, ivory and infrastructure to support shipbuilding and silver processing—some of these finds dating to the end of Solomon’s reign.

Kingsley was also involved in the discovery of an ancient anchor around the Israelite port city of Dor

(about halfway between Joppa and Tyre). Underneath the 2.5-meter-long, 50-centimeter-thick stone object were wooden beams believed to be part of a ship’s keel. The anchor and the wood were radiocarbon-dated to the 10th century B.C.E., during the reign of King Solomon.

Other Clues From Spain

In addition to the plenteous gold and silver artifacts found in Spain (and on display in its National Archaeological Museum; see *ArmstrongInstitute.org/g22* for more information), some stand out for this eastern link with Tyre and Israel in biblical times.

Even in the time of King David, there is evidence of Levantine merchants in Iberia. In a 2008 article, titled “The Chronology of the Late Bronze Age in Western Iberia and the Beginning of the Phoenicians Colonization in the Western Mediterranean,” Mariano Torres Ortiz wrote: “The resuming of trading contacts between the Eastern and the Western Mediterranean begins in the 10th century B.C.E., maybe in the late 11th century. An echo of these contacts could be remembered in the quotations in 1 Kings 10:22 and 2 Chronicles 9:21 referring to the maritime enterprises of King Hiram I of Tyre, maybe in partnership with the Israelite King Solomon. These contacts can be detected in the presence of a Late Bronze Age Atlantic spit and a Ria de Huelva fibula in tomb 523 at Amathus ...” that “should be dated at the very latest in the middle or early second half of the 10th century B.C.E.”

Additionally, he mentioned a Cypriot-type bowl at Berzocana that “confirms the Eastern Mediterranean presence in Western Iberia.” (Cyprus’s Kition port also came under Tyrian rule at the beginning of the 10th century B.C.E.)

The decades and centuries following Solomon’s reign are riddled with more objects confirming a link between the Holy Land and Spain.

An ancient site in Cadiz turned up remains dating to just over a century after Solomon’s reign. The site was rich in Phoenician pottery and bones—the DNA analysis of which has shown a link to Phoenicia.

Even farther inland, connections have been found linking Spain to Israel. Over 100 stelae found in southwestern Spain depict various warriors with a variety of apparel and accoutrement that are like depictions found on stelae in Galilee, Syria and Turkey. They date to just after Solomon’s reign to about two centuries later (see sidebar, page 14).

In addition to trade networks, several other factors may have encouraged actual migration from the Levant into Iberia: a 762 B.C.E. civil war in Tyre, Amos’s earthquake around 760 B.C.E., and two decades of bullying from Assyria, beginning around 740 B.C.E. and culminating in a great Israelite captivity of 721–718 B.C.E.

Biblical Archaeology in Spain

A warrior stele with a Mediterranean-style chariot

MANY CENTERPIECES OF Europe's grand archaeological museums are artifacts uncovered in Middle Eastern expeditions. Blockbuster artifacts like the Louvre's Code of Hammurabi or the British Museum's Cyrus Cylinder were not found in the countries they reside in today but are from the mysterious Orient. Spain's National Archaeological Museum (*Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, or MAN) is different. Its focus is not on exotic relics from Egypt or Iraq but on local objects from the Stone Age to medieval Islamic rule.

Considering biblical archaeology generally refers to the lands of the Bible (namely the Middle East), one would think MAN would be an unlikely place to find biblical artifacts. Yet Spanish history has a surprising connection to the Bible—and the *local* artifacts in Spain's archaeological museum can affirm this. While there are no artifacts like the Mesha Stele or Sennacherib's prisms, there are plenty of artifacts reflecting general cultural practices that correlate

with those described in the Bible.

The Warrior Stelae

A large number of stelae dating to the Late Bronze Age were discovered in southwestern Spain. These stelae depict various warrior figures, sometimes shown wearing a horned helmet or equipped with other instruments of war, such as swords, spears and shields. Over 100 of these stelae have been discovered.

On one such stele, the warrior is shown with a Mediterranean-style chariot. The image, however, is erroneous: The wheels were placed on the wrong portion of the chariot. Archaeologists suspect whoever designed the stele never saw a chariot for himself. In other words, the motifs of the stele have influences from abroad—specifically, from the east. The stele was found in the Cáceras province closer to Madrid and the center of the country rather than the southern coast.

It is important to note that “Bronze Age” means different years in different parts of the world. It is generally defined as between the time from mass production of copper objects to mass production of iron objects. In the Middle East, the Bronze Age is generally dated from about 3000 B.C.E. to 1200 B.C.E. But in much of Europe (including Spain), the Bronze Age isn't considered to have ended until well into the first millennium B.C.E.

Scholars date these “warrior” stelae to the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E. (900–700 B.C.E.), the time immediately after kings Solomon and Hiram would have been on

the scene (mid-900s B.C.E.). Many skeptics of the biblical account believe the Phoenicians did not start colonizing Spain until several centuries after Solomon, beginning around the year 800 B.C.E. The warrior stelae show that there was a cultural influence potentially as early as a century before that. And considering the iconography would have been familiar to the ancient Iberians before the stelae were set up, the stelae could imply an even earlier cultural exchange. The fact that some of the stelae were found so far inland suggests how pervasive this influence would have been.

Meanwhile, stelae depicting similarly designed horned figures have also been found in the Mediterranean. A stele found in Bethsaida in northern Galilee, dated to the mid-to-late eighth century B.C.E., is the only example found in the Holy Land. But two similar stelae have been found in southern Syria, and one in Harran in southern Turkey. Scholars estimate these stelae are supposed to depict some sort of Levantine pagan deity.

The Gold of Tarshish

Some of the most exquisite objects found in ancient Tarshish are various examples of goldwork. A set of golden candlesticks is believed to represent a deity related to trees. The set dates from between the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. and was found near Seville.

A golden belt discovered in a funerary trove depicts a hero (identified as Melqart) fighting a lion, along with the characteristic Phoenician sphinx. Like some of the warrior stelae, this belt was found far inland.

The Bible mentions Solomon hiring Phoenician craftsmen and utilizing Phoenician supplies in constructing God's temple in Jerusalem. Gold isn't mentioned as a commodity he requested from

the Phoenicians, yet gold was a vital part of the temple: “And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until all the house was finished; also the whole altar that belonged to the Sanctuary he overlaid with gold” (1 Kings 6:22). The Bible states that King David had gold collected before Solomon’s reign (1 Chronicles 22:14). Considering Israel’s trade links with Tyre, it is logical that some of this gold could have come from Tarshish.

Shekels of Silver

With Phoenician business came Phoenician business practices. Historians believe the first official minted currency in the ancient Mediterranean was in sixth-century B.C.E. Lydia (modern-day Turkey). Hacksilver preceded minted coins. The silver’s value was based on the weight of the collective hoard of silver fragments. For example, in Genesis 23:16, Abraham purchased a plot of land for 400 shekels, a shekel being a unit of weight roughly equivalent to 9 grams.

Spain’s National Archaeological Museum displays the “Driebes Hoard,” found just outside Madrid. According to the museum, the hoard of hacksilver was hidden in the late third or early second century B.C.E. by the Carpetani, a pre-Roman Celtic group in the Iberian Peninsula. The hoard shows that hacksilver was still being used well into the first millennium B.C.E.

As society developed during what we call “classical antiquity,” the use of hacksilver gave way to coins and official currency. Meanwhile, as the Phoenician heartland in modern Lebanon fell subject to foreign rulers, the colonies in the western Mediterranean banded together to form a new civilization: ancient Carthage. Based in North Africa, the Semitic-speaking Carthaginians controlled much of southern Spain until the Roman conquest.

Like their contemporary Greeks

and Romans, the Carthaginians minted their own coins. But old habits apparently die hard. Spain’s archaeological museum has several examples of their currency—a silver coin they called a “shekel.”

The Pozo Moro Monument

MAN’s centerpiece is the Pozo Moro Monument, a massive sixth-century B.C.E. mausoleum constructed with ashlar stones and covered in religious iconography, originally found disassembled in a necropolis near Valencia. The structure may have had a second story and may have been as much as 10 meters tall. Much of the current edifice is reconstructed. Scholars are divided as to whether it was built by Phoenicians or native Iberians. But the mausoleum certainly has Near Eastern influence.

One of the most intriguing reliefs is on the sixth row of the monument’s east side, where a monster or demon holding a knife is depicted. Directly in front of him is a small figure on a pedestal interpreted as a child ready to be sacrificed. On the left of the image is another supernatural being with a child in a bowl, apparently about to be devoured. Child sacrifice was one of the grislier sins God condemned the Israelites for partaking in. Deuteronomy 18:10 forbade an Israelite from causing “his son or his daughter to pass through the fire.” Verse 9 states that such a practice was among “the abominations of those nations” who were in the land before the Israelites, including the Phoenicians.

Another relief on the west side depicts a goddess with stylistic similarity to the Egyptian sky goddess Hathor. Behind her wing is a tree with a curiously curved top.

Compare this with MAN’s fifth-century B.C.E. funerary stele from Andalusia: A motif similar

in design to the tree on the Pozo Moro Monument is found on the back of the stela. MAN identifies this symbolism as representing a “tree of life.”

Such trees were common themes in Phoenician art. At the Large Stone Structure (palace of David) in Jerusalem, a similarly designed column capital with palm volutes was discovered by Kathleen Kenyon in 1963. These so-called proto-Aeolic capitals have been found all over the Levant. The Bible lists Hiram’s Phoenicians as the constructors of David’s palace (2 Samuel 5:11). The Phoenicians evidently brought their artistic tastes with them when they sailed to Spain.

Biblical Archaeology in Spain

Pagan idols and human sacrifice may not be the most inspiring aspects of biblical archaeology. But Spain’s National Archaeological Museum collection illustrates a remarkable truth. Spain—on the other side of the known world from Israel—would probably be the last place anybody would expect to find significant biblical archaeological remains, yet so much of early Spanish history can be explained by using the Bible. Many of the objects in MAN’s collection would probably be hard to interpret otherwise.

The Bible is a book primarily about the people of Israel. But that doesn’t mean it can’t be used to explain history—even foundational history—in other parts of the world. The displays at Spain’s National Archaeological Museum demonstrate this. Even if the history displayed points to aspects of the past not particularly admirable, the Bible becomes a great unifier of mankind. In this sense, the Bible becomes the foundational text of many more civilizations than meets the eye. This includes the Spanish.

MIHAÏLO S. ZEKIC

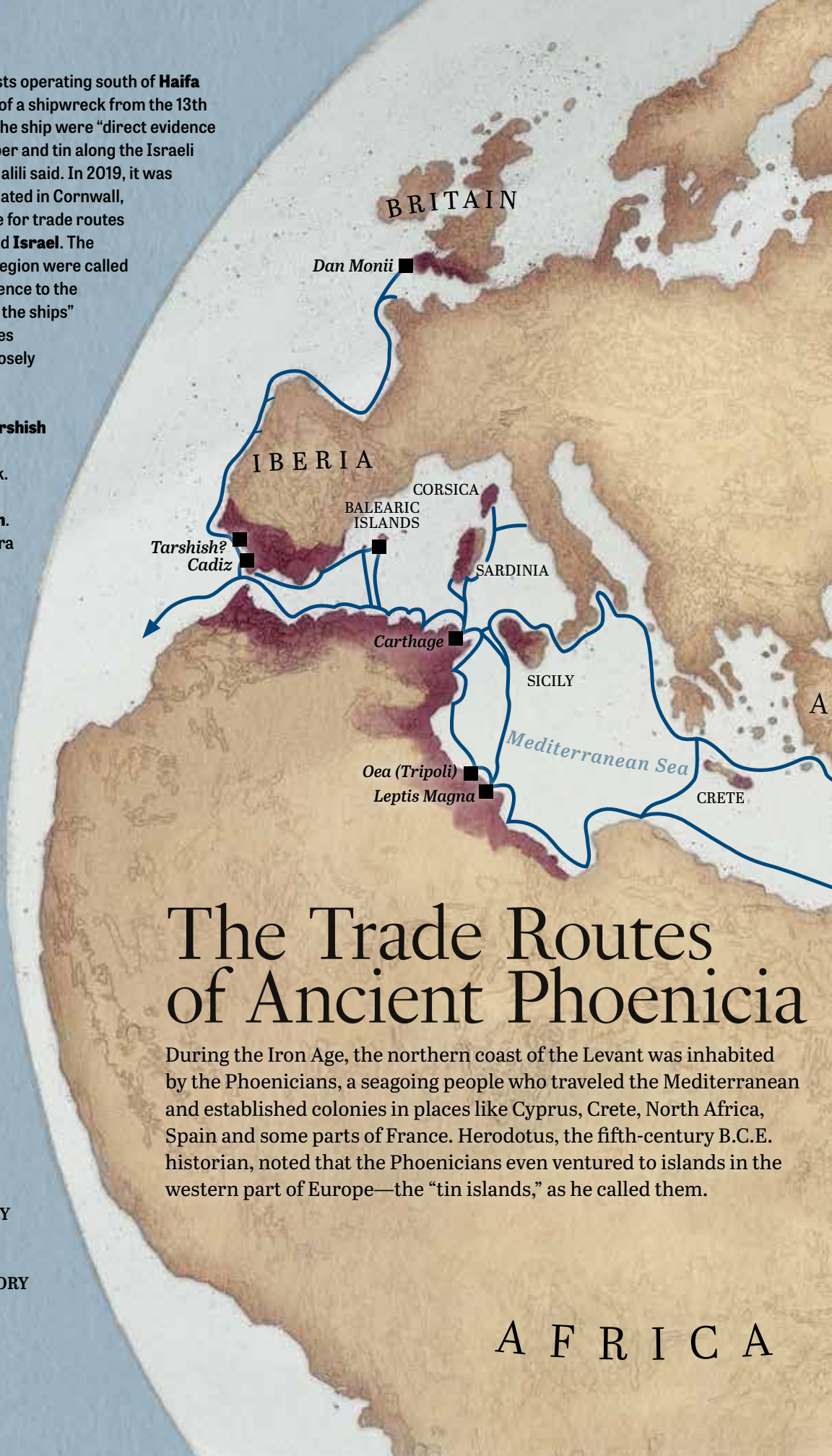
In 2012, marine archaeologists operating south of **Haifa Bay** discovered the remains of a shipwreck from the 13th century B.C.E. Tin ingots on the ship were “direct evidence for marine transport of copper and tin along the Israeli coast,” archaeologist Ehud Galili said. In 2019, it was concluded that this tin originated in Cornwall, England—providing evidence for trade routes between the **British Isles** and **Israel**. The ancient people living in this region were called **Dan Monii**—perhaps a reference to the tribe of Dan who “sojourn by the ships” (Judges 5:17). Perhaps Danites and Phoenicians operated closely in the tin trade.

The Bible is very clear that **Tarshish** was a bustling port city along the Phoenician trade network. All indications are that this **Tarshish** was located in **Spain**. Excavations at a Solomonic-era mine in **Spain** have produced Phoenician pottery, ivory and evidence of shipbuilding and silver processing. Phoenician pottery and bones were also discovered at an ancient site in **Cadiz**. DNA analysis of the bones revealed a link to Phoenicia.

Phoenician explorer Hanno traveled to **West Africa** in the fifth century B.C.E.



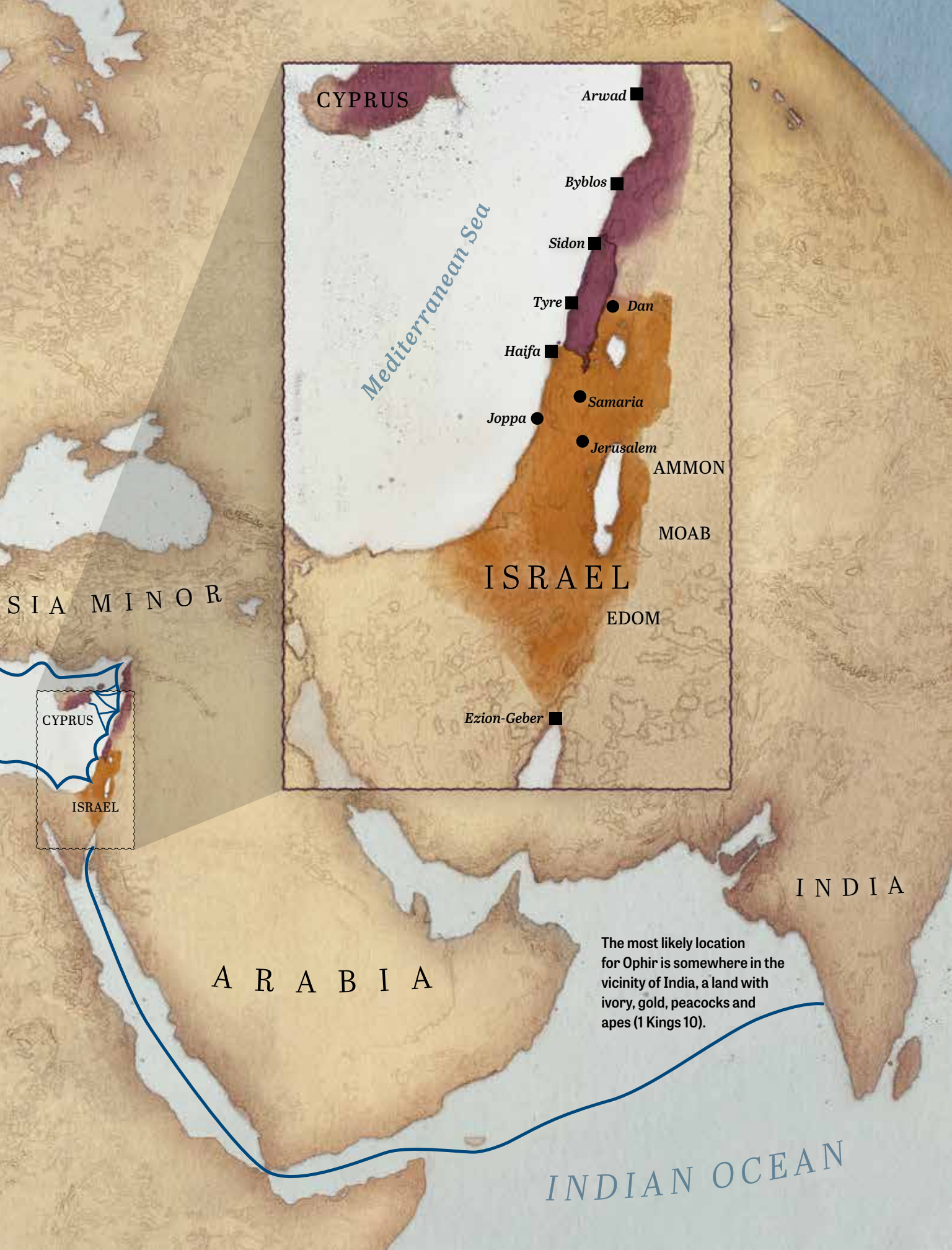
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TRADING POST



The Trade Routes of Ancient Phoenicia

During the Iron Age, the northern coast of the Levant was inhabited by the Phoenicians, a seagoing people who traveled the Mediterranean and established colonies in places like Cyprus, Crete, North Africa, Spain and some parts of France. Herodotus, the fifth-century B.C.E. historian, noted that the Phoenicians even ventured to islands in the western part of Europe—the “tin islands,” as he called them.

A F R I C A



CYPRUS

Arwad ■

Byblos ■

Sidon ■

Tyre ■ ● Dan

Haifa ■

Joppa ● ● Samaria

Jerusalem ●

AMMON

MOAB

ISRAEL

EDOM

Ezion-Geber ■

ASIA MINOR

CYPRUS

ISRAEL

INDIA

ARABIA

The most likely location for Ophir is somewhere in the vicinity of India, a land with ivory, gold, peacocks and apes (1 Kings 10).

INDIAN OCEAN



The Man ‘Who Made Israel to Sin’

The archaeological record of two cities gives us insight into one of Israel’s most influential personalities.

BY NICHOLAS IRWIN

HE FOUNDED THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL. Every king who reigned after him walked in his footsteps—a refrain repeated through the books of Kings. He did not follow after King David and the glorious history of the nation during that golden age. Instead, he established a new form of religion. He formally institutionalized nationwide paganism and idolatry. Our editor in chief Gerald Flurry said that what this man did led to “the *greatest disaster in the history of Israel*!”

Yet it’s not as though this man was disadvantaged. The biblical record says he was handpicked by God and that his reign was prophesied to King Solomon.

“Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon: ‘Forasmuch as this hath been in thy mind, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant’” (1 Kings 11:11). Who was this servant?

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

Jeroboam worked closely with Solomon. He was “industrious” and a “mighty man of valour,” given “charge over all the labour of the house of Joseph” (verse 28). As a member of Solomon’s inner circle, Jeroboam learned firsthand what makes a king and a kingdom successful. Yet following Solomon’s death, Jeroboam led an



insurrection, one that divided the kingdom into two—Judah and Israel.

In its 200-year history, the northern kingdom of Israel never produced one righteous king. It never recovered from the foundation that Jeroboam laid.

And yet as infamous as this king is, there are still those who attempt to say he didn't exist. One biblical scholar has gone so far as to suggest that all that he did "cannot be placed under Jeroboam I. It is a polemical [controversial] fiction that transfers an event from the time of Jeroboam II to the early days of the northern kingdom" ("How Jeroboam II Became Jeroboam I"). In other words, *Jeroboam I is actually Jeroboam II*—a king who ruled nearly 200 years after his namesake.

But the Bible is clear: All 18 kings who ruled the kingdom of Israel followed in the way of Jeroboam THE FIRST!

So once again, we turn to archaeology: Can the details of the Bible regarding the activities of Jeroboam I be verified by the archaeological record?

Solomon's Servant

We are introduced to Jeroboam I at the end of King Solomon's reign, when God tells the king that, due to his sins, his kingdom would be divided. The message to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:31-32 is remarkably specific: "... I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon,

and will give ten tribes to thee—but he shall have one tribe, for My servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel."

This enraged Solomon, who immediately attempted to kill Jeroboam (verse 40). Jeroboam, however, fled to Egypt under the care of Pharaoh Shishak (for more information on Shishak, see article, page 2).

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam came to power, and Jeroboam returned to Judah. The people then elected Jeroboam to go before their new king and request that the tax burden be lightened (1 Kings 12:4). Rehoboam, however, refused.

"And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel ..." (verse 20). The nation was now divided. Ten of the tribes went with Jeroboam to the north; only Judah, Benjamin and a portion of Levi remained with Rehoboam in the kingdom of Judah.

The First Capital

Jeroboam's reign began around 931 B.C.E. The first thing the Bible specifies Jeroboam did was "built Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim, and dwelt therein ..." (1 Kings 12:25). Shechem was the northern kingdom of Israel's first capital. Why Shechem? This city was clearly important to Israel. This was something King Rehoboam knew well, which is why he chose it as the city of his coronation (verse 1). Jeroboam, too, was aware of its importance.

Consider some of the history regarding Shechem. This location is first mentioned in Genesis 12:6, describing Abraham entering Canaan and receiving his first promise from God. It is then described 200 years later when Jacob removed the idols from his household and "hid them under the terebinth [tree] which was by Shechem" (Genesis 35:4).

Shechem lies in the valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Before his death, Moses had told Joshua to divide the children of Israel between these two mountains and have them alternate singing of blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 27-28). This chorus would have rung loudly in the Late Bronze Age walls of Shechem.

Finally, Shechem is where Joshua gathered the people of Israel, reminded them of their history with God, and made a covenant with the people (Joshua 24). Carl Keil and Franz Delitzsch write in *Commentary on the Old Testament*: "For this solemn act he did not choose Shiloh, the site of the national sanctuary, ... but Shechem, a place which was sanctified as no other was for such a purpose as this by the most sacred reminiscences from the times of the patriarchs."

It was also at this location that the Israelites buried the bones of Joseph, which they had brought out of Egypt (verse 32).

Jeroboam actively worked to take the people's focus away from King David and away from Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26-27). Shechem, a city with so much patriarchal history, was the ideal counterfeit to Jerusalem.

Refortifying the City

Since the Bible specifies that Jeroboam "built Shechem," we should expect to find evidence of this project in the archaeological record.

Various archaeological expeditions have taken place at Tell Balata, modern-day Shechem, since 1913.

Archaeologists have uncovered a Bronze Age temple, Iron Age granary, casemate walls and the quintessential Israelite four-room house. But what can we learn about the time of Jeroboam, between 931 and 910 B.C.E.?

According to Kenneth A. Kitchen in *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, “Shechem was destroyed circa 1100, and remained so until a modest settlement arose in the 10th century.” Jeroboam’s stint in Shechem was short-lived. In the same verse it says he rebuilt Shechem, it says he “went out from thence, and built Penuel” (1 Kings 12:25) and made that his capital. With such a short stint in Shechem, we should expect to find a more modest settlement—one that was focused on rebuilding the defenses and less on building monumental structures.

Prof. George E. Wright described his experience excavating Shechem in the 1950s, writing: “Further digging showed that we were inside the guardroom of the gate-tower, erected on the ruins of an earlier tower. These ruins had been cleaned off, leveled and filled over before the new guard room had been erected. In connecting these remains with known history it seemed probable that we here had evidence for the refortification of Shechem by Jeroboam I”

Edward F. Campbell described for *The Biblical Archaeologist* magazine in 1963 how a probe under the stones of the northwest gate proved a rebuilding project occurred there in the early Iron II around 922 B.C.E.

According to Professor Campbell, this level presented “tangible evidence of Jeroboam I’s rebuilding (1 Kings 12:25) and a return to city status” (*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*). The archaeological evidence shows that Shechem sat destroyed for nearly 200 years. Then right at the time we would expect to see Jeroboam’s rebuilding project, the city is resettled and the fortifications are rebuilt.

In “The Stratification of Tell Balatah (Shechem),” archaeologist Lawrence Toombs wrote, “The fortunes of the city improved dramatically when Jeroboam I rebuilt its walls and made it briefly the capital of the northern kingdom”

The Religious Center

Jeroboam’s primary efforts were directed toward establishing the religion of the northern kingdom. By controlling the religion, he could control the people. “If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn back unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah” (1 Kings 12:27).

Jeroboam wanted to completely separate the people from the southern kingdom. That meant keeping them



from going to Jerusalem for the annual holy days. “Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them: ‘Ye have gone up long enough to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan” (verses 28-29).

Jeroboam established two centers of pagan worship—one in the south (Bethel) and one in the north (Dan).

Tel Dan is one of Israel’s most well-known archaeological sites. Israeli archaeologist Avraham Biran excavated the site between 1966 and 1999. What was happening in the city of Dan in the 10th century B.C.E.? According to the archaeological record, a large plaza for cultic worship was being established.

Professor Biran wrote in *Biblical Dan*, “The earliest evidence of a cultic character found in the course of excavation goes back only to the 10th century B.C.E., to the time of King Jeroboam I, son of Nebat.” What Biran uncovered at the site proves that at the exact time Jeroboam I was founding a new religion in the city of Dan, a large 2,700-square-meter (29,000-square-foot) cultic center was established in that very city.

Biran summed up his earliest discoveries, writing: “Walls built of large basalt and dolomite fieldstones and boulders, two complete pithoi with a snake decoration, an incense stand, the broken fragments of a clay tub with a shelf used as a seat, and other vessels



An iron frame illustrates the original size of the altar at Tel Dan.

The archaeology of Tel Dan proves that this important city at the northern border of Israel served as a religious center from the time of Jeroboam I.

altar, including one of the four corners and the steps that would have led up to it. By discovering one of the corners, Biran was able to estimate the size of the altar, which would have been around 3 meters (10 feet) tall. This altar sat within a 12.5-meter-by-14-meter ashlar enclosure. A smaller horned altar was discovered within this enclosure. Although these remains date later than Jeroboam I, they highlight that this area continued to operate as a well-developed, important cultic site.

According to Biran, the discoveries at Tel Dan “are the most extensive late 10th–early 9th century B.C.E. cultic remains so far uncovered in Israel.”

led us to conclude that we were digging within the sacred precinct of the city of Dan of the 10th and beginning of the ninth centuries B.C.E. The date, based on the ceramic evidence, corresponds with the time of Jeroboam I’s reign.”

He then added that even though no golden calf was found—a treasure that certainly would have been hauled away by invading enemies—they had “uncovered enough evidence to enable us to reconstruct King Jeroboam I’s sanctuary at Dan.”

Biran’s team uncovered a podium that would have served as a foundation for a temple. This podium is made up of finely worked ashlar stones. The southern face is 18 meters (59 feet) long.

Storerooms near the temple housed two, large, 300-liter pithoi that were decorated with a snake relief. Amihai Mazar writes in *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* that these pithoi would have “probably contained libation liquids.”

Biran’s team made other discoveries that pointed to sacrifices taking place at Tel Dan, such as a sunken, plastered basin surrounded by flagstones. Biran said these discoveries “aroused much speculation.” While he couldn’t know for sure exactly how these features were used, the presence of bone fragments and ash around the basin indicate that this was used for “some sort of animal sacrifice.”

Biran’s team also discovered cultic remains from the eighth century B.C.E., such as remnants of an

The Stain of Jeroboam

Both Tell Balata and Tel Dan give us insight into one of the most turbulent times for the nations of Judah and Israel. The once powerful, united nation was now fragmented and weak.

By looking into the archaeological record of these two cities, we see clear evidence of Jeroboam’s first capital city and one of his most important religious centers. But what Jeroboam did goes beyond the refortified walls or pagan temple.

He left a stain on the northern kingdom of Israel. It never recovered from the faulty foundation that he laid. God had given him a remarkable promise: “[I]f thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in My ways, and do that which is right in Mine eyes, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did, that I will be with thee, and will build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee” (1 Kings 11:38).

But Jeroboam rejected the house of David, turned his back on Jerusalem—God’s chosen city—and brazenly disobeyed God.

Two hundred years after Jeroboam I reigned, Shechem and Dan fell to the Assyrians. The collapse of these cities ultimately gets back to the fact that every succeeding king of the northern kingdom followed “in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherein he made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 22:53). ■



‘And Rehoboam Built ... Lachish’

THE BIBLE STATES THAT KING DAVID’S grandson Rehoboam built numerous cities in Judah, including the important site of Lachish. Tel Lachish has been excavated over the course of seven expeditions. Yet until recently, there was no corresponding archaeological evidence of late-10th-century B.C.E. fortification wall at the site.

Prof. Yosef Garfinkel has led two of these expeditions. In 2022, he discussed his discoveries with *Let the Stones Speak* podcast host Brent Nagtegaal. The following interview has been edited for clarity.



BRENT NAGTEGAAL (BN): Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, thanks very much for joining us today.

PROF. YOSEF GARFINKEL (YG): It’s my pleasure.

BN: You led the fourth expedition here a few years ago and now you’re back. What’s the draw here at Lachish?

YG: Well, first of all, the new project is in cooperation with a university from Korea and also some Australian universities. So it’s the seventh expedition to Lachish because there were two other expeditions after we left. We were the fourth, there were the fifth and sixth and now we are the seventh.

BN: So why do people keep coming back to this site as opposed to others?

YG: This is one of the most important archaeological sites in the Near East, not just Israel. It’s really amazing because this site is connected with Egypt, it’s connected with Mesopotamia, it’s connected with Greece and Cyprus, and it’s connected with the biblical tradition.

BN: The biblical tradition is probably the most interesting for our listeners. Perhaps you could just briefly give the

There is a biblical tradition that Rehoboam fortified 15 cities in Judah, and one of them is Lachish. We decided to go to Lachish because the identification of Lachish is beyond any doubt.

main highlights of Lachish and its importance in biblical history for us.

YG: Lachish was one of the important Canaanite cities. We know about it from the strengths of the fortifications, from the richness of the archaeological discoveries that were made here. We have the Amarna tablets where we have six letters the king of Lachish sent to Egypt. And then in the biblical tradition, this Canaanite city was destroyed by Joshua when the people of Israel entered the land of Canaan.

BN: Then following on that does it fall out of use of importance? And if it does, till when does it feature in the Bible?

YG: The Bible mentions Lachish as a Canaanite city that had been conquered by the people of Israel in the time of Joshua. And then the Bible mentions Lachish again about 300 years later or so, when it was first fortified by King Rehoboam, the grandson of David and the son of Solomon.

BN: That was the period that you spent a lot of time in your first expedition uncovering. That was one of your research questions, right? To try and find that city.

YG: If you put it in a larger context, I dedicated the last 15 years or so to archaeological research of the 10th century B.C.E. I started at Khirbet Qeiyafa and then another site called Khirbet al-Ra'i, where we have remains from the time of David. We have carbon dating clearly from 3,000 years ago. Also, the pottery in both sites is the same, and we have a fortified city in Judah from the time of David. In Khirbet Qeiyafa, we discovered a nice temple model, which fits the biblical description of Solomon's palace and temple. The same type of architecture, which is typical to royal architecture, appears in the model, and the model was found here in Judah and the dating is 1000 B.C.E. So we have David and Solomon.

And then there was a third king, Rehoboam.

BN: What can archaeology tell us about Rehoboam?

YG: There is a biblical tradition that Rehoboam fortified 15 cities in Judah, and one of them is Lachish [2 Chronicles 11:9]. We decided to go to Lachish because the identification of Lachish is beyond any doubt. And when we came here, as we said, we were the fourth expedition, but the point was that the first, the second and third expedition didn't find much evidence about the first Iron Age level at the site. This is Level v, by the way. The last Canaanite city is Level vi.

BN: So each of these numbers are basically the different cities through different periods that lived on the same site.

YG: When you start excavating at Level i, it was the late Persian and Hellenistic. You go down to Level ii, it's been destroyed by the Babylonians. You go further down and Level iii has been destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E. You go further down, you have Level iv, which is already a fortified city all over the mound, and under it you have Level v. And then you have a hiatus and levels vi and vii are already Canaanite.

BN: So you're saying that this Level v city is the one that, until your expedition, there was little or no evidence of it on this site?

YG: There was heavy debate about Level v; first of all, if it was a village or city. And the second debate was about the chronology. Some people said it's from the 10th century B.C.E., some people said it's from the ninth century B.C.E., and other scholars thought the eighth century B.C.E. So you have a range of ideas—250 years between the earliest and the latest proposed dating.

BN: And so you came here with this research question in

So the major question that I asked myself is why the earliest expedition couldn't find clear evidence from Level v, and it was a bit unclear.

mind: *Is this a fortified city during Level v? And let's try and get some dating for it if we can find it.* Did you find that and how are you going to continue on from that?

YG: The major question that I asked myself is why the earliest expedition couldn't find clear evidence from Level v, and it was a bit unclear. My conclusion was that maybe it's a smaller site. The other expedition excavated mainly in the western and southern part of Tel Lachish. The northeast corner of the tel was hardly excavated. Now we know, for example, at Hazor that in the 10th century B.C.E. it was a smaller city, and only later in the Iron Age they built a much larger city, and you see it in other places as well. So I predicted that probably at Lachish we would have the same phenomenon. So we should find the earliest city or the place where the earliest city existed, and there we will have answers. If it was on a smaller part of the site and not all over, this is where we need to investigate.

I asked myself, *If you come to Lachish and you build a smaller city, where would you build it? In the north, in the east, in the south, in the west?* And my conclusion was it's

here in the northeast corner. Why? Because the valley is over here. In the valley you have water. The valley is good land for agriculture. And also the valley is the main road leading from Ashkelon, the port city, into Hebron in the hill country.

From Ashkelon to Lachish is a one-day walk. From Lachish to Hebron is another day's walk. So caravans leaving the port city with all kind of goods will come here, stay here a few days, participate in various economic activities, and then continue another day to Hebron. So the valley is important. And I said the orientation of the city should be toward the valley. So that's why we chose this area, and we excavated here along the slope in various areas. And here, for example, we came immediately to Level vi, which means that levels i through v had completely eroded away. And in other parts, we found immediately Late Bronze or even Middle Bronze periods. So where is this disappearing level, Level v?

After we understood the erosion processes, we started excavating a little further away. And indeed we found Level v. We found a city wall, and we found houses abutting the city wall, so we know that Level v is fortified.

BN: How big was the wall that you discovered?

YG: It's about 3 meters wide—a very impressive city wall. Today it's all covered with vegetation, so it's hard to see, but I can give you photos taken during the excavation and you can see what it looks like. And then the other question is, what is the dating? We know it's Level v because it was covered by the city wall of Level iv, and it's sitting on the Canaanite Level vi. So if Level vi is below and Level iv is above, it must be v. This is the stratigraphic sandwich.



Area CC: the northern side of Tel Lachish



Storage buildings abutting the city wall of Level V

We sent olive pits for the carbon dating and the dates were from the last part of the 10th century B.C.E. and the first part of the ninth century B.C.E., something like 920 B.C.E. till about 860 B.C.E. This is the range of the radiocarbon dating. So this exactly fits a city that was built in the time of Rehoboam.

BN: I understand that there is a debate about just how big the city was during Level v. You and one of your colleagues wrote a paper about this, and he has a different idea of the size of the city during Rehoboam's time, or this Level v. What does he think, and what and how do you diverge?

YG: The point is that we found part of the city wall of Level v in two places—both in the northeast part of the site. And the question is why the expeditions who worked in the west and in the south didn't find more of the city wall? So I thought that at Lachish, based on other sites like Tel el-Farah in the north (biblical Tirzah), such Iron Age cities didn't have much manpower when they started out; they didn't have many resources. So they built smaller cities and after 100 years or so, when you have more population, more resources, then they enlarge the city and you can see more urban development. And I saw that probably at Lachish it's the same process. They came and built a smaller city on one third or one fourth or 40 percent of the tel. And after 100 years, when you have more population, they enlarge and built Level iv all over the site.

So this was my personal view, and I'm sure about this. My young student, Hoo-goo Kang, he has a bigger appetite. He said, *No. Level v was immediately built all over the site.* So you want to prove me wrong? OK, why not? I'd be happy to be wrong.

BN: So I think you've told me before he's even more maximalist than you.

YG: Yes, he is. He wants to go to the opposite side, to the southwest corner of the site and to make a trench along

the fortification line. And we will try to find the Level v city wall in the far edge of the site.

BN: And he's digging at the same time, right?

YG: Yes, we will work together. So if he's right, then Level v was bigger, and if I'm right, Level v was smaller.

Editor's note: After two more brief seasons of excavation of the site after this interview, evidence of the 10th-century B.C.E. city wall was indeed found at the opposite side of the tel, showing that the entire site of Lachish was fortified during the time of Rehoboam. Professor Garfinkel discusses this on a recent *Let the Stones Speak* podcast at [ArmstrongInstitute.org/1138](https://www.armstronginstitute.org/1138).

BN: But either way, we're debating about the size of the city of Level v that dates from around Rehoboam's time, not whether it existed.

YG: We have radiocarbon dates from the old excavation. We have about four to five radiocarbon dates. But about three or four months ago, we completed a very large radiocarbon project, and we sent to Oxford University 80 samples for dating from Lachish and from Khirbet al-Ra'i. We wanted to have better dating of the 13th century B.C.E., the 12th century B.C.E., the 11th, the 10th and the 9th. Some of the samples from Lachish show that we have Canaanite and then the kingdom of Judah. And then in Khirbet al-Ra'i we have the time of the judges. When Lachish was uninhabited, the settlement center moved to Khirbet al-Ra'i. And the two sites together give us the full sequence.

BN: I think it is interesting, you referenced the Bible talking about Rehoboam building all these certain cities,

So it fits perfectly with the typical Judean urban concept, one you don't have in other sites. In the north, in the kingdom of Israel, or in Philistine sites, you don't have houses in the city walls abutting each other.

this account is mentioned in the book of Chronicles, if I'm not mistaken. What's the significance, do you think, of the fact that it's in Chronicles and perhaps not mentioned in an earlier source?

YG: The Bible is not a newspaper in which you have exact information about day by day by day. They took 400 years from David to the destruction of the temple, and then it's all composed and condensed into the books of 1 Kings and 2 Kings. So they couldn't put in all the information. I wish the Bible was 100 times bigger.

BN: Don't we all.

YG: We have a very condensed history and sometimes for some kings you have only few sentences and that's it. So the whole 20 or 30 years, you almost know nothing about their activities. So I don't know why something is kept here, why something is kept there. The fact is, that's what we have.

BN: And then the fact that the biblical book of Chronicles is written as one of the last books in the Tanakh. Rehoboam is 500, 600 years, even 700 years

some people would say, from the time of writing. And so how would the chronicler know that Rehoboam built this site?

YG: But basically what we have is a city list. We have a list of 45 cities in Judah and Benjamin. And the list could be kept as a list. It's not a big narrative about some other activities. It's very condensed information, as a matter of fact.

BN: So I know that there are some other archaeologists that came out after you discovered this, this fortification of Level v, dating to the time period around Rehoboam. And they came and said, *OK, fine, you found a city, city walls and it dates to around Rehoboam's time, but it's not Rehoboam. It's locals. It's probably a local Canaanite population.* How would you give ethnic identity to archaeological discoveries? What can you say to this: the Judean nature of the fortification?

YG: We have a very nice city wall, and the houses are abutting the city wall. In Khirbet Qeiyafa we have the same features, but in Qeiyafa, it was a casemate city wall. So the city wall was not a solid wall. It contained rooms. Here it's a solid wall and I think it's indicating that

Lachish was more important from the very beginning. That's why they built a stronger city with a solid wall. But the houses abut the city wall here like in Khirbet Qeiyafa and like in other cities in Judah like Tel Natsbeh, Beth Shemesh, Tel Beit Mirsim and Tel Shiva. So it fits perfectly with the typical Judean urban concept, one you don't have in other sites. In the north, in the kingdom of Israel, or in Philistine sites, you don't have houses in the city walls abutting each other.

And then you have the pottery. We have the typical Judean pottery,



Volunteers work at the Tel Lachish excavation.



Private houses abutting
Level V city wall

and you can see the continuation of this material culture here in Tel Lachish. And also the site itself, you have Level v, then Level iv was built on top of it and Level iii without any destruction. So the same people continued to live here till Sennacherib came here in 701 and destroyed the city.

BN: So you're saying that because there's no destruction layer between then we definitely know this was run by the Judeans, it makes sense that Level v was used by the same people?

YG: Exactly. Levels v through iii are part of an ongoing occupation of about 200 years.

BN: So that was your fourth expedition. Now you're back in 2022. I see that this area behind us has already been prepared for excavation. You've got a surveyor out at the site today to do a bit of preparatory work. When do you begin, how long is it going to last, and what do you hope to uncover as you're excavating this year?

YG: The idea is to enlarge the area, and I hope to excavate after, three years or so, maybe six, seven or eight complete houses. And once we have more houses and more pottery, we'll have a better understanding what is the fingerprint of this period from a pottery point of view. We'll have more animal bones and we can have information about cults if we find figurines or not find figurines. It's also important if we find an inscription, if we find a seal, whatever, a metal object, whatever. We just want to know more about the people who lived here in the later part of the 10th century and beginning of the ninth century B.C.E.

BN: So adjacent to us here is where you found the city wall and the house that you're talking about. And this is basically a continuation in this direction of that same city wall and adjacent houses you're hoping to find.

YG: Yeah, exactly.

BN: So perhaps just one final question. If you could put this discovery of a fortification during the late 10th century in the context of the larger debate over David and Solomon, do you feel like this debate is coming to a close now or is it going to keep on raging no matter what is discovered? Typically, Rehoboam doesn't fit into this debate, but this site is putting Rehoboam into that debate. Where does it stand right now?

YG: Well, the kingdom of Judah existed for about 400 years. The eighth and the seventh are well known because we have the Babylonian destruction and also the Assyrian destruction. But the earlier two centuries, the ninth and the 10th, are not so well known and that's why the debate started. And maybe 40 years ago, indeed there was a room for such a debate because we didn't have much information. And I dedicated a really large part of my academic life to research the 10th century B.C.E. In Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet al-Ra'i, we have the beginning of the 10th century B.C.E., and here in Lachish, we have the latter part of the 10th century B.C.E. and the ninth century B.C.E. So together all these three sites bridge the gap, and I don't think that today people can have the same extreme ideas as they have 40 years ago.

BN: Well, thanks very much for your time today. I really hope to come back and see you during excavations.

YG: Sure, you are welcome to join us.

BN: I'm sure your team's going to do great work out here, all of your team from the different parts of the world. Thanks very much for your time.

YG: Sure, it's my pleasure. ■



Tel Arad temple "holy of holies"; a matzevah can be seen in the far corner.

The Sacred Standing Stones of Israel

The Holy Land is full of *holy* stones, and so is the Bible. What does archaeology say?

BY SAMUEL MCKOY

AMIDST THE VERDANT HILLS OF SOUTHERN England, colossal stones jut vertically from the soil in praise of a deity. The site is called Stonehenge, and 1 million people visit it every year. Neolithic Britons, however, were not the only ancient people to hoist massive stones on their ends as objects of worship. Nor are the British Isles the only place where such sites are found. From Egypt to Easter Island, from India to Israel, humans throughout antiquity have set up stones as a form of worship.

The Hebrew Bible documents the erection of stones and stone structures as a form of religious devotion. The Hebrew word for a standing stone is *matzevah* (מצבה; plural: *matzevot*; often transliterated *massebah* and *masseboth*). In the Bible, *matzevot* are both objects of lawful practice as well as pagan worship. Even today, some of these stone henges of Israel remain standing.

What has archaeology uncovered about Israel's sacred standing stones? And how well does that archaeology align with the biblical text?

What Exactly Is a *Matzevah*?

“Typically, it [a *matzevah*] is an elongated stone with a rounded top, which was placed on its narrow side.

In most cases, a natural stone was chosen for this purpose, and it typically bears no signs of intentional shaping, or only minimal ones,” Hebrew University professor Yosef Garfinkel writes in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Vol. 4, *Excavation Report*.

This description is reminiscent of the command by Moses to build an altar in the Promised Land: “And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar of stones; *thou shalt lift up no iron tool upon them*. Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God *of unhewn stones ...*” (Deuteronomy 27:5-6). Though this command of Moses had nothing to do with *matzevot*, it shows that not shaping stones was an architectural cultic practice of the time period in which Moses lived.

These altar stones were not idols though, unlike most *matzevot*, which were usually erected to represent a deity or the abode of the deity. There are examples of *matzevot* being used to commemorate an oath, covenant or event, functioning as monuments rather than idols. “The precise meaning of *masseboth* is controversial,” wrote Prof. Uzi Avner. Scholars debate “whether they represented deities or had other functions” (“*Masseboth Sites in the Negev and Sinai and Their Significance*”). Rather than generalize and say that all *matzevot* are idols (or monuments), each must be judged by its archaeological and textual context.

It is noteworthy that the majority of standing stones are decorated, except for those discovered in Israel, which are almost always unembellished. “Standing stones found in Israel and the immediately surrounding area are almost always plain stones. This ‘plain stone tradition’ has long been identified by scholars as connected with the biblical prohibition against iconism (images) of any kind,” wrote archaeologist Doron Ben-Ami (“*Mysterious Standing Stones*”). Interestingly, the *matzevot* of pre-conquest Canaan are also bare. “The plain stones appear in Palestine, however, even before the emergence of Israel; it seems there was already a tradition of avoiding figures or even inscriptions” (*ibid*).

While scholars still debate the exact purpose of *matzevot*, their ubiquity is unquestioned. “This variety of locations and uses clearly indicates that a standing stone was indeed an integral part of the cult and religion of the ancient Near East,” Garfinkel writes. “It was easily adapted to various needs and became one of the most popular cultic paraphernalia of the region. Its

widespread success is probably due to its simplicity: Any elongated stone could become a *massebah* if it was placed on its narrow side” (*op cit*).

A survey of some of Israel’s *matzevot* shows they served several purposes.

Canaanite *Matzevot*

Matzevot were especially prevalent in the land of Canaan before the Israelite conquest. Professor Avner noted that *matzevot* originated in the Sinai and Judean deserts, but later became commonplace in the highlands of Canaan: “[T]he *masseboth* were very rare until the third millennium B.C.E. and only during the second millennium did they become really common, but they never reached the numbers of the desert” (*op cit*).

Canaanite *matzevot* have been discovered in Middle Bronze Age temples at Shechem, Byblos, Megiddo, Tel Kitan, Tel el-Hayyat, Gezer, Hazor and other sites.

Archaeology shows that Gezer was a well-developed city filled with objects of pagan worship prior to Israel’s conquest. In the center of Canaanite Gezer is a large ritual area with 10 massive standing stones arranged in a line. The tallest is 3.2 meters (10.5 feet). A large carved stone basin sat in the middle of the row of stones. Scholars speculate that these stones and basin were used for religious rites. Some believe they were a symbol of Gezer’s union with 10 other regional city-states.

Joshua 11:10 identifies Hazor as the head of all of the Canaanite kingdoms. This city, built at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, also had a massive temple. In that temple’s final phase, on its western side, there are about 30 standing stones set in four rows. The stones had no writing or decorations, but they did have flat stones at their bases, which likely served as offering tables. These stones were eventually covered with fill in the Late Bronze Age. Above that fill, archaeologists have uncovered two bases for what would have been large pillars at the entrance to the complex.

Professor Garfinkel also found a *matzevah* in secondary use within the gate structure at Khirbet Qeiyafa, a unique, single-layer Iron Age site. The origin of this *matzevah* is unknown, but it predates the Israelites who built the city. This stone had no inscription, and yet was found tucked within another construction and upside down, as if it were intentionally desecrated.

A similar discovery was made at Beersheba. A large altar of finely carved ashlar stones had been built in



Standing stones at Gezer

Beersheba. Archaeologists discovered these matching stones used in other reconstruction efforts at the site, including in a public storage building at Stratum II of Iron Age II (eighth century B.C.E.). Other stones were found outside the city wall. Dr. Ziony Zevit wrote of the stones, “I assume that the stones were desacralized prior to the alterations made during Stratum II It is possible that the altar formed by these stones may have been desacralized and dumped during the period represented by Stratum III.” Stratum III is believed to date to the ninth century—well within the Israelite period. These desacralizing efforts were performed by Israelites.

This method of desacralizing objects has also been found in other kingdoms, like Egypt. It was a common way to reuse the stones of heretical cults. “Both Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beersheba present the same pattern—a dismantled cultic object is found concealed in the walls of a building near the city gate,” wrote Garfinkel. “Both buildings seem to have had a public or official function. The biblical tradition presents numerous cases of desacralizing cultic paraphernalia or cultic places.”

By the Iron Age II (10th century B.C.E.), when Khirbet Qeiyafa was built, it appears that some of the Canaanite

matzevot were being mistreated, even vandalized, by the area’s new inhabitants: the Israelites. Why would Israel dislike Canaan’s *matzevot*? After all, the biblical text clearly shows Israel using *matzevot*.

Biblical *Matzevot* Laws

Worshiping a rock would clearly violate the Second Commandment, which prohibits idolatry. Mosaic law expressly forbade Israelites from establishing physical objects as representations of spiritual entities. Moses issued specific commands about the destruction of *matzevot* in Canaan: “Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their doings; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and break in pieces their pillars [*matzevot*]” (Exodus 23:24). The same command is issued in Exodus 34:13, Deuteronomy 7:5 and 12:3. The Israelites were also commanded not to raise such *matzevot* (Leviticus 26:1; Deuteronomy 16:22). These pillars were idols, and they were not tolerated in the biblical Israelite religion.

But the Bible shows that there were evidently other functions for *matzevot*. Otherwise, Moses would have been a hypocrite, since he erected *matzevot*: “And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mount, and



Standing stones at Hazor

twelve pillars [*matzevot*], according to the twelve tribes of Israel” (Exodus 24:4).

Joshua, who the Bible says meticulously followed the laws of Moses, set up 12 stones as a monument to future generations of the miracle that had allowed Israel to cross the Jordan River (Joshua 4:3-9). There is no evidence that these stones were condemned by either God or the biblical authors. What was the distinction?

The biblical text does not condemn *matzevot* that are set up to commemorate an oath or special event. For instance, the Bible records Israel’s namesake (the patriarch Jacob) anointing a *matzevah*. As Jacob traveled from Beersheba to his ancestral lands of Haran, he camped outdoors and used a stone for a pillow. During the night he had a dramatic dream, one in which God reminded him of the promises made to his fathers, Abraham and Isaac. In response, Jacob took the stone that had served as his pillow and “set it up for a pillar [*matzevah*], and poured oil upon the top of it” (Genesis 28:18).

There is no indication Jacob used the stone for worship. Rather, it was a physical symbol for the covenant that God had made to Abraham and God’s presence with Jacob.

In Genesis 31:13, God reintroduces Himself to Jacob, saying, “I am the God of Bethel, where thou didst anoint

a pillar [*matzevah*], where thou didst vow a vow unto Me” Again, God mentions the pillar in conjunction with the vow that was made between Himself and Jacob. In Genesis 35:14, after another interaction with God, Jacob memorialized the location by erecting another *matzevah*. Then verse 20 shows Jacob erecting a *matzevot* over the grave of his wife Rachel. These verses clearly show the legal use of *matzevot* within biblical law.

Mosaic law prohibits *idolatry*, which included using a *matzevot* in religious worship.

As noted, Moses repeatedly told Israel to destroy the Canaanite *matzevot*. The desacralized *matzevot* at Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beersheba prove that some Israelites followed through on these commands. Moses would not have issued such commands unless worshipping *matzevot* was a common practice, and archaeology has proved it was an extremely common practice. The lack of iconography on the standing stones at this time also corroborates the aniconism of Mosaic law compared to the cultural norms of other nations like Egypt or Babylon.

The writings of the prophets also indicated that Israel, and other nations, would use *matzevot* in the future. Isaiah, for instance, wrote, “In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land

of Egypt, and a pillar [*matzevah*] at the border thereof to the Lord” (Isaiah 19:19). Jeremiah, however, sarcastically mocked those “[w]ho say to a stock: ‘Thou art my father;’ And to a stone: ‘Thou hast brought us forth ...’” (Jeremiah 2:27). Again, the prophets did not condemn *matzevot* unless they were worshiped as idols for a deity or the abode of a deity.

Joshua’s Pillar at Shechem

Not long after entering Canaan, Joshua and the 12 tribes of Israel met at Shechem to renew their covenant with God. Shechem was a huge Canaanite city that has been excavated extensively. In the early 20th century, German theologian and archaeologist Ernst Sellin uncovered the largest *matzevah* in Israel near the altar of Shechem’s Canaanite temple.

The city of Shechem was not destroyed by Israel. Rather, it appears to have been occupied peacefully due to an amicable king named Labayu (referenced in the Amarna letters; see ArmstrongInstitute.org/881). Shechem was designated as a Levitical city within Manasseh. Despite being under Israelite control, it does not seem that the city’s massive Canaanite temple was destroyed. Why was this temple left standing? Wasn’t there a command against Canaanite *matzevot*?

Tradition suggests that Joshua actually used this stone as a symbol of the renewed covenant between God and Israel. The theory is based off of this passage: “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord” (Joshua 24:25-26). It should be noted that the stone is not described as a *matzevah* but by the common Hebrew word אבן, or *even*, meaning “stone.” Though the word is different, the function of the stone appears to be the same as other *matzevot* that are not expressly forbidden in the Bible: as symbols of a covenant between God and Israel.

The large *matzevah* discovered in Shechem does date to the time of Joshua’s conquest. American archaeologist and Harvard professor Lawrence E. Stager wrote this of the stone: “The slab stela is almost 5 feet wide and 1.5 feet thick; it still stands almost 5 feet tall, although in antiquity it was probably twice that height, to judge from the proportions of known stelae. The upper half must have been broken off in antiquity Nearby the Austro-German excavators found a stone socket with a groove 5.4 feet long, 1.5 feet wide and 1.33 feet deep—the perfect fit to hold Masseba 1 upright. Two smaller stelae flanked the entrance to the temple” (“The Shechem Temple”).



“Since the temple existed in Joshua’s day,” wrote Dr. Bryant Wood, “it is possible this was the ‘large stone’ he set up ‘under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord’ at Shechem” (“From Ramesses to Shiloh”).

The *matzevah* in its present state seems to be simple and unmarked. Stager wrote, however, that the “size, shape and, above all, the quality of preparation of the great slab stela suggest that it was once plastered and then painted over with an elaborate inscription.” This matches well with another command of Moses: “And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over the Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster. And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over ...” (Deuteronomy 27:2-3). Perhaps Joshua plastered and wrote upon this exact pillar stone, but it wore off or was erased with time.

The *Matzevah* of Abimelech

This *matzevah* of Shechem features in the story of Abimelech. Abimelech was the illegitimate son of the judge Gideon and a Shechemite woman. He led an insurgency that granted him kingship over much of Israel, headquartered in Shechem. Judges 9:6 says that all of the men of Shechem crowned Abimelech king “by the terebinth of the pillar [*matzevah*] that was in Shechem.” The use of this pillar implies that it

had some important historical connection. Abimelech would reign over much of Ephraim and Manasseh for 3½ years. He would destroy the Canaanite temple of Shechem, which the writer of Judges called the temple of Baal-Berith (verses 46-49).

The archaeology surrounding the *matzevah* at Shechem matches this story amazingly well. Baruch Halpern, in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, wrote, “[T]he archaeological record at Shechem dovetails nicely with the story: The site was apparently abandoned after a destruction in the mid-12th century B.C.E.” This fits the biblical chronology for when Abimelech destroyed Shechem, its temple and its *matzevah*. Though the entire city was not razed, the Bible specifically mentions Abimelech burning Shechem’s temple. American archaeologist G. Ernest Wright’s excavations discovered signs of burning within the cella (inner chamber) of this temple (“The Excavation of Shechem and the Biblical Tradition,” by Edward Campbell and James Ross).

German excavators under archaeologist Ernst Sellin discovered the *matzevah* of Shechem lying on its side. It was near a stone which had a trough-shaped cut, which they supposed was the socket for the *matzevah*. The *matzevah* had been broken by careless excavators, as retold by archaeologist Robert J. Bull in his article “A Reexamination of the Shechem Temple.” The broken *matzevah* was put back in its socket-stone and was cemented into place by later archaeologists. It is unknown when the *matzevah* was first dislodged from its base.

The story of Abimelech and the archaeology at Shechem show that *matzevot* were still important cultic items in the judges’ period, even being in the place where Abimelech was crowned. Later kings would also be crowned near a stone, including King Joash of Judah (2 Kings 11:14). Even far-off and later kings of Ireland, Scotland and England would be crowned over a stone, which they referred to as Jacob’s pillar stone.

The Matzevot of Arad

Did the Israelites ever worship *matzevot*? Prof. Uzi Avner wrote about two stones discovered in a temple at Arad: “But still, the case of Arad is crucial. In light of the evidence presented above, it seems difficult to escape the conclusion that the pair of *masseboth* represented a pair of deities. Also, we cannot argue that the temple was not Israelite. ... This means that *masseboth* were

To find Israelites or Judahites worshiping *matzevot* during this period matches perfectly with the biblical narrative. The Bible condemns this action in accordance with the Mosaic law.

worshiped in an official cult, not only a popular one, if this distinction ever existed” (“Sacred Stones in the Desert”). In other words, the Israelite cult worshiped *matzevot* during its later periods.

Does this contradict biblical commands? Yes. Does it contradict the Bible narrative? No. The temple of Arad was built in the ninth century B.C.E., after the reign of King Solomon. The Bible says that Solomon succumbed to Canaanite cultic practices. 1 Kings 11:7 says that Solomon built “a high place for Chemosh the detestation of Moab ... and for Molech the detestation of the children of Ammon.”

Rehoboam followed in his father’s ways. The Bible says that, under Rehoboam, “Judah did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. ... For they also built them high places, and pillars [*matzevot*], and Asherim, on every high hill, and under every leafy tree” (1 Kings 14:22-23). To find Israelites or Judahites worshiping *matzevot* during this period matches perfectly with the biblical narrative. The Bible condemns this action in accordance with the Mosaic law.

Corroborating Evidence

The *matzevot* of Israel provide us with unique insight into the religions and cultures described in the Hebrew Bible. The Bible provides commands about these stones and shares several stories that feature them. A few of these stones have stood throughout the ages (even if underground), others have been reraised in the past few hundred years since archaeologists have ventured into the Holy Land. All of these sacred stones, though, have shown that the Bible accurately reflects the cultures of the period in which it describes.

All across the Earth, standing monoliths have mystified researchers. In Israel, a special textual source gives us remarkable insight into these sacred stones—the Bible. The *matzevot* of Israel show that the biblical authors aptly described the cultural practices of the surrounding peoples, providing us with an accurate historical text. ■

During the reign of Judah's King Zedekiah, Jeremiah had been prophesying that Tyre would not escape Babylon's yoke (Jeremiah 27:2-11). What this "yoke" meant for Tyre was particularly noteworthy. This is found in the book of Ezekiel, another famous prophet of that time period.

Ezekiel 26:7-11 and Ezekiel 28:7-10 describe Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of mainland Tyre, which occurred around 573 B.C.E., during the reign of Ithobaal III. But until then, it appears Tyre was profiting off Babylon's exploits by trading slaves—a commodity that flooded the market as Nebuchadnezzar was conquering the area. Ithobaal III was known for his wisdom and shrewdness in trade, as described in Ezekiel 28:1-10 as the "prince" of Tyre.

Though many Jewish captives ended up settling into new lives in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4-7; 52:31-34), the slave trade facilitated the brokering of Jewish exiles *to other parts of the world*. And TYRE brokered these deals.

Ezekiel had other prophecies for Tyre. Ezekiel 27 describes the power of its trade networks; verses 12 to 13 read: "TARSHISH was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded for thy wares. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy traffickers; *they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass for thy merchandise.*"

Tarshish is mentioned, among other locales, in the context of a slave trade: "[T]hey traded the persons of men ... for thy merchandise." Javan, another name for Greece, is also mentioned here. Joel 3:4-6 specifically mention *slaves of Judah* as being sold by "Tyre and Zidon" to the Grecians. (The Greeks at this time were also colonizing southern France.) Amos 1:9 calls out Tyre for betraying its alliance with Israel to sell many slaves to Edom. Slaves were being dispersed in many directions. Evidence of Tarshish (the region of Spain) being involved goes beyond Ezekiel's description.

This is where Obadiah's reference—the only place to use the Hebrew word for "Spain"—sheds more light on the subject: "And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel, That are among the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath, And the captivity of Jerusalem, that is in Sepharad, Shall possess the cities of the South" (Obadiah 1:20).

Until its conquest in 573 B.C.E., Tyre controlled the trading ports in the Gulf of Cadiz and the so-called Hesperides. Obadiah confirms that Jews were sent in that direction. Sepharad is clearly Spain. By the first century C.E., the Romans were calling this region "Hispania," a Punic or Hebrew phrase meaning "land of rabbits." But this name seems to have taken hold only after the original Phoenician traders started setting up

permanent cities in the Spanish inland.

Obadiah also mentions Zarephath, which is the Hebrew word for France. Again, this is when Greeks were establishing colonies on the Mediterranean coast of France—namely the cities Alalia and Massalia.

Even more fascinating is Obadiah's choice of words to describe those of the "captivity." The word usually used for "captivity" in the Bible is *shevi* and has a connotation of prisoners or those captured in war. This is the word Ezra used to describe those who returned from Babylon decades later (Ezra 2:1; 3:8; 8:35). Lamentations also opts for this word to describe Jerusalem's fall (Lamentations 1:5, 18). But Obadiah uses the word *galut*, which sometimes is used in reference to the Babylonian captivity of Jews at this time, but it has more the implication of exile, with a literal meaning of being carried away. This is clearly what Obadiah is describing as he is using terms for faraway trading posts and settlements in the western Mediterranean.

Tyre's slave trade at this time wouldn't have benefited Nebuchadnezzar much—with slaves going to the western end of the known world. That is exactly what Ezekiel 29:17-18 describe: Tyre's destruction ended up profiting Babylon little.

Where Can We Go From Here?

As Kingsley stated: "By exploring the maritime trail beyond the Bible lands and beneath the ocean's incorruptible waves, the shouts of angry academics fall silent and a rare resource rises—truth."

The implications from the rich trading network between Israel, Tyre and Spain—of great wealth and even slave transport—raise intriguing questions about Israel's influence in the ancient world.

One area to consider would be language. After all, these traders had to communicate with one another. Obviously, Phoenicians and Israelites could converse. The marriage of Jezebel (daughter of Phoenicia's Ithobaal I) to Israel's Ahab gives us no reason to believe a language barrier existed here. Ithobaal I was also the great-grandfather of Dido, the legendary founder of Carthage. And it is reasonable to assert, at this time, that Hebrew (or at least its Punic, or Phoenician, dialect) was the major trade language in the region.

Furthermore, we should not be surprised to find similarities between the language of the Levant and that of the Iberian Peninsula. It is no wonder that the area of Tartessos (the biblical "Tarshish" of the west) developed a writing system based first on the Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet.

These ancient connections between the Holy Land and Spain also have other captivating ramifications. Trade into the Atlantic Ocean raises questions about

just how far these networks ran. The tin wealth of the British Isles likely factored into King David's stockpiling of temple materials, and perhaps the "isles" David referenced in Psalm 72:10 were in fact British.

A 2012 discovery of tin from a 13th-century B.C.E. shipwreck near Haifa Bay was confirmed in 2019 as being sourced from Cornwall, England (see [ArmstrongInstitute.org/393](https://www.armstronginstitute.org/393) for more information). Logically, by David's time, this trade route would have been firmly established.

Some evidence would suggest that these trade networks reached Ireland. An *Irish Central* article dated April 17, 2023, documents a perplexing archaeological find buried in Northern Ireland's Navan Fort: the skull of a Barbary ape dating between 390 to 20 B.C.E. This species of monkey is unique to North Africa and the island of Gibraltar. One logical explanation given was "the existence of trade routes from the Mediterranean to Ireland."

Irish history also connects its own land to ancient Spain with an invasion of "Spanish" nobles around the time period of King David, and not long after Tyre had established trading outposts in southwestern Spain. These invaders of Ireland—called "Milesians" (Latin for *Spanish soldiers*)—per some accounts were a branch of the Jewish tribe of ancient Israel that had settled in Spain for a time.

Looping this region into the language discussion ignites other intriguing connections. In addition to linguistic connections between the Tartessians and Hebrews, there may be the same between the Celts and the Tartessians (and by extension, Hebrew).

Though too detailed a topic to explore here, it is noteworthy that Prof. John T. Koch's 2009 article "A Case for Tartessian as a Celtic Language" challenges the predominantly accepted theory of Celtic origins—that the language developed in mainland Europe and spread west into Britain alongside iron-working technology. Koch determined the opposite: that the Tartessians likely spoke a Celtic dialect and that Celtic is actually a Bronze Age trade language developed in Spain and the British Isles before spreading east into mainland Europe. The arrival of Hebrew-speaking Phoenicians, or Hebrews themselves, into this part of the world would have enthralling implications for the development of the Celtic language.

Beyond some scant archaeological finds and some new linguistic theorizing, the Holy Land's Sephardic connection into the British Isles may still lie largely in the realm of speculation for most. But the connection to Spain is beyond dispute. Harmonizing the biblical record with archaeology, the link between the Holy Land and Spain is certain, strong and quite ancient. ■

MAGAZINE FEEDBACK

Every new publication that reaches me in Kibbutz Huldah excites me very, very much, and I cannot avoid this kind of excitement. Your very existence, your work and your contribution to humanity are nothing less than historical. Thank you all.

HULDA, ISRAEL

Your latest issue of *Let the Stones Speak* was as exciting as the previous ones. But what this issue excelled in over previous ones was the attention and the appreciation you paid to the scores of your volunteers who make those excavations and discoveries possible.

KIBBUTZ EVRON, ISRAEL

I sincerely want to express my gratitude for your excellent work on *Let the Stones Speak*! The many interesting articles give good grounds to why we should trust the historicity of events and people described in the Bible along with some "meat on the bones"!

BORÅS, SWEDEN

I have immensely enjoyed my introductory issues of *Let the Stones Speak* and the recent special exhibit edition. The factual details and accompanying illustrations are presented in a highly readable and understandable format, something not often seen in works discussing the importance of archaeological finds.

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

I wanted to congratulate the Armstrong team for an information-rich issue of the journal. It will provide a lot of insights over the upcoming snowy months here in Canada.

ONTARIO, CANADA

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November-December 2024, Vol. 3, No. 6 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.

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