

LET THE STONES SPEAK

The magazine of the
ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

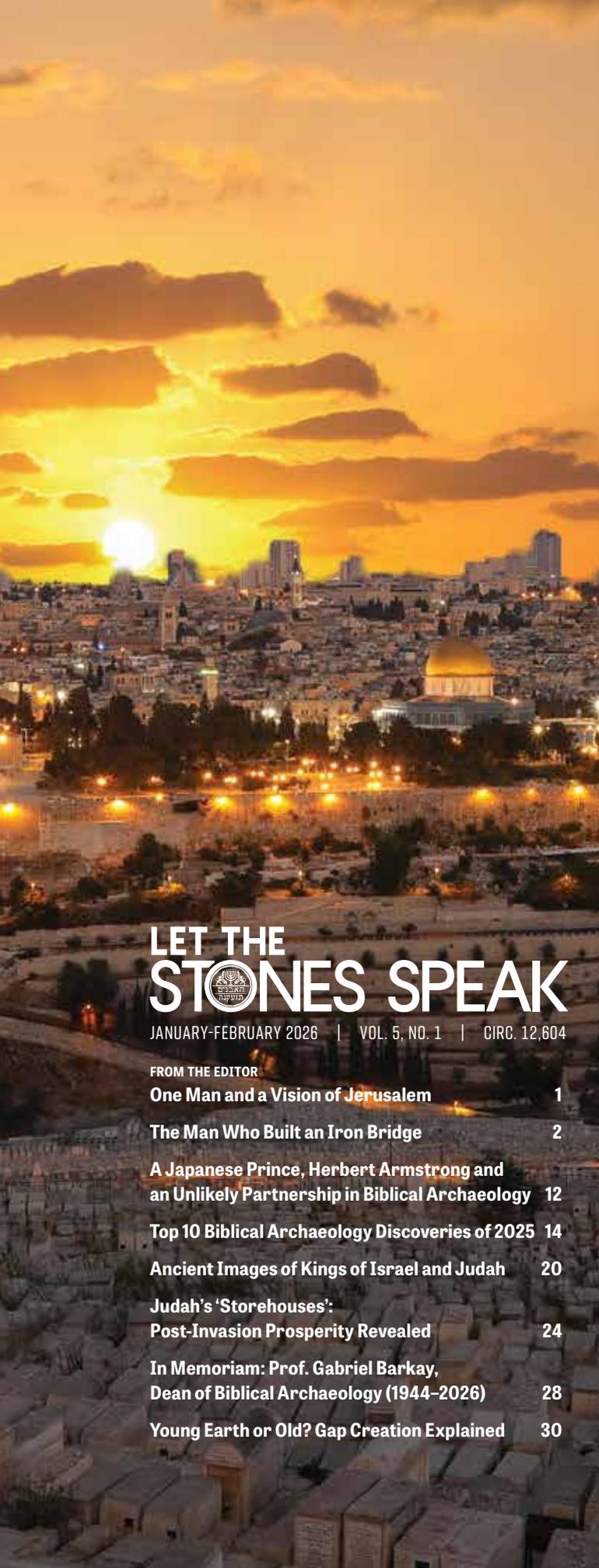


JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2026



A Tribute to
Our Namesake—
Jerusalem's Friend
Herbert W. Armstrong

Herbert W. Armstrong and longtime
friend Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek



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FROM THE EDITOR

One Man and a Vision of Jerusalem	1
The Man Who Built an Iron Bridge	2
A Japanese Prince, Herbert Armstrong and an Unlikely Partnership in Biblical Archaeology	12
Top 10 Biblical Archaeology Discoveries of 2025	14
Ancient Images of Kings of Israel and Judah	20
Judah's 'Storehouses': Post-Invasion Prosperity Revealed	24
In Memoriam: Prof. Gabriel Barkay, Dean of Biblical Archaeology (1944–2026)	28
Young Earth or Old? Gap Creation Explained	30



FROM THE EDITOR | GERALD FLURRY

One Man and a Vision of Jerusalem

WISE KING SOLOMON ONCE WROTE, “WHERE there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29:18; King James Version). *Vision* is a mental image of what the future will be or could be. We all need vision—and *hope* and *inspiration*—or we perish!

Our namesake, Herbert W. Armstrong, a man who died 40 years ago this year, was a man of vision. He wrote in his autobiography, “To climb the ladder of ultimate success in accomplishment, one must exercise vision” Yet this quality, he said, was “rare among people.” Vision defined his more than 50 years as a philanthropist, humanitarian, educator, minister and unofficial ambassador for world peace.

Mr. Armstrong knew that of all places on Earth, there was great vision in Jerusalem. No other city has a past, present or future filled with such meaning and hope. There is VISION in the Old City, in the City of David and on the Temple Mount. There is VISION in the hills of Judea and on the coastal plains. There is vision in the ancient ruins that testify of this land’s incomparable history and in the many sensational artifacts that have been uncovered in archaeological excavation, illuminating Israel’s ancient past.

Israel today is also the epicenter of major issues and trends, both regionally and globally. Though the news media do not convey it, there is enormous vision in this daily news. Israel’s domestic politics, the terrorist threat, the ongoing conflict with Iran and its proxies in Lebanon and Gaza, and many other events become staggeringly meaningful when viewed in light of Israel’s past and the writings of its prophets. These sacred writings foretell a magnificent future for this incomparable city. That future, soon to be realized, should set our hearts aflame!

Behold Your God!

King Solomon wasn’t the only one to discuss vision and its importance to individual and national health. *Many*

biblical priests, prophets and leaders talk about vision, especially the importance of the Jerusalem vision.

In Psalm 137:5-6, the psalmist wrote: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, If I remember thee not; If I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy." Written in Babylonian captivity, this beautiful song expresses deep yearning for this city of God. It is a perpetual reminder to *hold fast* the vision of Jerusalem.

The Bible is filled with passages that describe how important it is to cherish the Jerusalem vision.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote extensively about Jerusalem. Consider Isaiah 40, which is about both the past and the future, and illuminates the Jerusalem

vision. Verse 9 says, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, Get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, Lift up thy voice with strength; Lift it up, be not afraid; Say unto the cities of Judah: 'BEHOLD YOUR GOD!'"

Jerusalem and the State of Israel are filled with history and events that declare, "Behold your God!" Traveling that land is like walking through the Bible. There are biblically significant archaeological excavations, artifacts and ruins all over the country. In its own way, each of these declares, "Behold your God!"

This message, though, must also be specifically declared and made plain, or people will not recognize it. During the last half of the 20th century, this vision was trumpeted by a specific individual—a man who has been called a modern-day "prophet" for Jerusalem.

Jerusalem's 'Prophet'

From 1965 to 1993, the mayor of Jerusalem was Teddy Kollek. He had a vision for the city and was able to turn much of that vision into reality.

After his fourth reelection as mayor in 1983, Kollek hosted a luncheon for a friend of his, with whom he could share, develop and expand his vision of his beloved city: Herbert W. Armstrong. Mayor Kollek deeply respected Mr. Armstrong's understanding of the Bible and of Jerusalem's central place in its history and prophecy. After Mr. Armstrong toasted the mayor's electoral success, Mayor Kollek smiled and responded from his chair, "Jerusalem at this time does not have a prophet. *You will have to be our prophet.*"

That statement, while offered in a lighthearted moment, showed insight. Mayor Kollek elsewhere told Mr. Armstrong, "The stories of the Bible are better known to you than to anyone around this table."

Mr. Armstrong was chancellor of Ambassador College, headquartered in Pasadena, California. A prolific author, educator, philanthropist and theologian, Mr. Armstrong traveled the world teaching the true causes of the problems facing humanity and their ultimate solutions. He directed many important projects, but his greatest passion, especially in the final decades of his long life, was for the Jewish state and for Jerusalem.

He personally befriended *all* of Israel's prime ministers and presidents during this time (article, page 2).

Like the biblical prophets and the great Jewish figures of antiquity, Mr. Armstrong had an extraordinary vision of Jerusalem and the Jewish state. He understood that there is tremendous hope and inspiration bound up in the past, present and future of this city and nation. And he devoted a lot of energy to sharing this hope.

In 1968, Mr. Armstrong and Ambassador College formed what Israel's tourism minister at the time called "an iron bridge that can never be broken" with Hebrew University and the State of Israel. Mr. Armstrong and Ambassador College supported several archaeological digs in the Old City, including the massive Temple Mount excavations

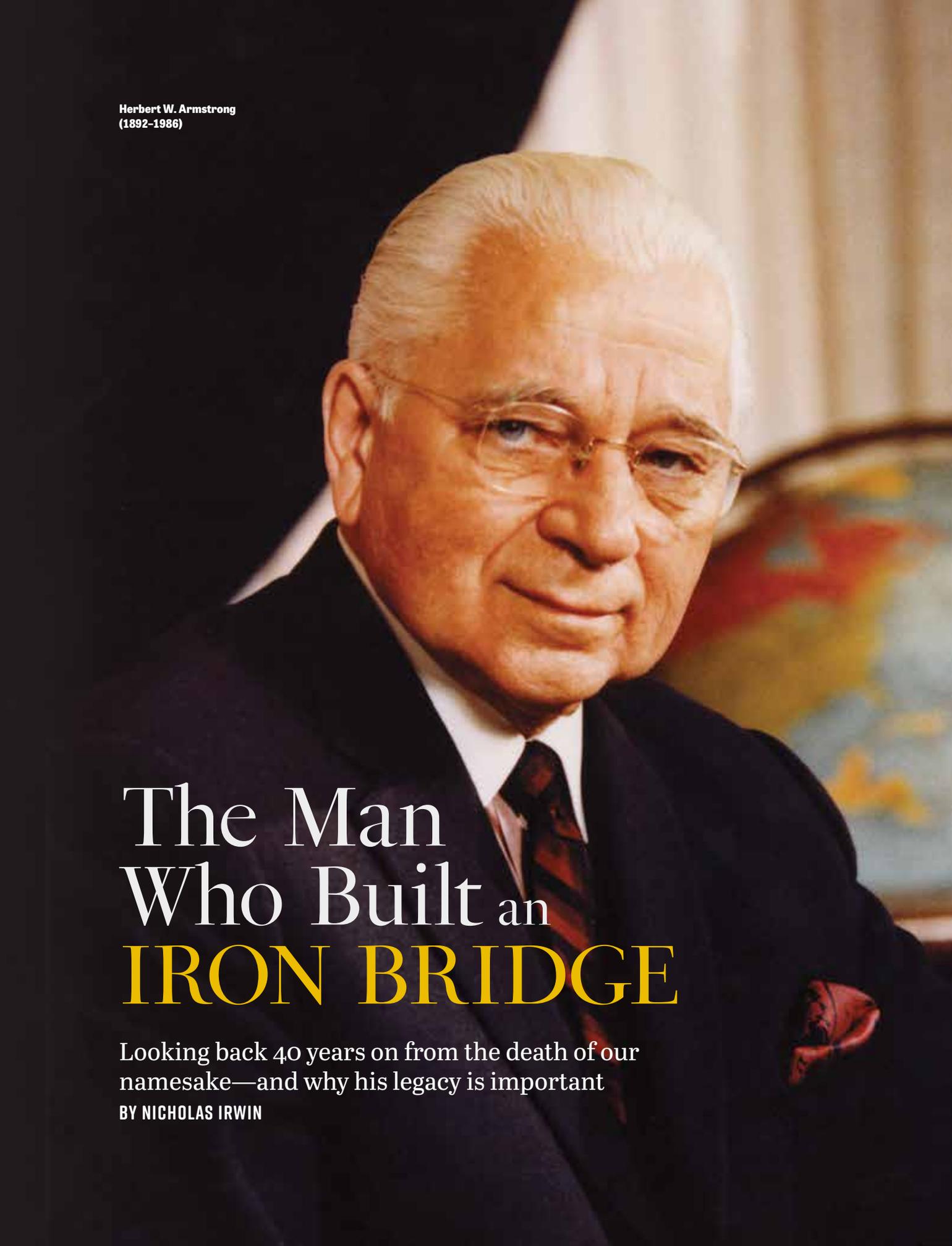
led by Prof. Benjamin Mazar and Hebrew University.

Mr. Armstrong's involvement in Israel's archaeology wasn't without its challenges and difficulties. Mr. Armstrong and Ambassador College were in a unique position as the first American-Christian organization to support biblical archaeology in Jerusalem after the 1967 reunification of Jerusalem. There were bound to be hurdles. But because of his love for Jerusalem, Mr. Armstrong was determined to surmount those obstacles! His knowledge of the Bible's prophecies kept him focused on that city. He saw its importance because HE HAD VISION!

On April 15, 1967, just as Mr. Armstrong was working to become more involved in Jerusalem, his wife of 49 years died. In the same letter to his followers announcing the death of his wife, Mr. Armstrong explained the tremendous hope there is in Jerusalem, highlighting that "Jerusalem is to be the CAPITAL OF THE EARTH!"

"His deep devotion to the ideals of peace and justice in the spirit of the biblical prophets was appreciated by his friends in Israel. His feeling for Israel and Jerusalem was manifested in his true interest in the archaeological excavations near the Temple Mount and in the City of David. His name will always be attached to this most important undertaking carried out in Jerusalem."

—Professors Benjamin Mazar
and Joseph Aviram,
January 1986 Joint Statement

A portrait of Herbert W. Armstrong, an elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right. In the background, a globe is visible.

Herbert W. Armstrong
(1892-1986)

The Man Who Built an **IRON BRIDGE**

Looking back 40 years on from the death of our
namesake—and why his legacy is important

BY NICHOLAS IRWIN

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG WAS BORN on July 31, 1892. He was an exceptional individual who lived a long and active life spanning the 19th and 20th centuries.

As our namesake, we deeply value and are greatly inspired by his legacy. So much of what he accomplished paved the way for what we have been able to do today.

Yet we aren't the only ones who have been impacted by this man. For 60 years, he touched the lives of millions of people as a humanitarian, educator, author, theologian, television presenter and philanthropist. "I have traveled over the four quarters of this globe we call Earth," he wrote toward the end of his life. "I have rubbed shoulders with the rich and the very poor and those in between. I have visited with captains of industry, emperors, kings, presidents and prime ministers. I have rubbed shoulders with and come to know the totally illiterate and poverty-stricken poor. I have seen this world firsthand at close range as have only the very few" (*Mystery of the Ages*).

Herbert Armstrong led a unique life—unlike any other in so many ways. When he died on Jan. 16, 1986—40 years ago this year—leaders across the globe wrote to the organization he had led expressing their appreciation and admiration for what he had accomplished. Consider a few of these statements.

The Israeli ambassador to the United States at the time of his death said he was a man "whom Israel regarded as a true friend."

Member of the European Parliament Otto von Habsburg called him "unforgettable."

The king and queen of Thailand said that with his death came a "sad and irreparable loss."

Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek said, "His good deeds were felt in many corners of the world."

The king and queen of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan expressed that they sincerely hoped his "life of benevolence" and "altruism" would be continued.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan told Mr. Armstrong's supporters, "You can take pride in his legacy."

Who was this man?

What He Did

Mr. Armstrong was an advertising man by trade. In 1924, he began his own business in Portland, Oregon. He had already been successful for many years writing ads for newspapers and magazines. But with this new business venture, he was well on his way to becoming a multimillionaire. That is, until, as he described in his autobiography, "*the bottom fell out!*" The Great Depression of the 1920s wiped away his success. "It

seemed, indeed, as if some invisible and mysterious hand were causing the Earth to simply swallow up whatever business I started," he wrote.

The loss of his business and material wealth was a humbling experience. "... I had been beaten down. I had been humiliated. I had been broken in spirit, frustrated," he wrote (*ibid*).

But he didn't stay down. This led to a change of direction in his life. He went from pursuing wealth and the accolades of men to being a student and teacher of the Bible.

In 1934, he published the first issue of his magazine the *Plain Truth*, which by the time of his death was read by one out of every 583 people on Earth. It had a monthly circulation of over 8 million—higher than *Time* and *Newsweek* combined.

He was also the presenter of the *World Tomorrow* television program, which aired on more than 400 television stations and 36 radio stations.

He authored more than 60 books and, by the time of his death, led a global work with an annual income of \$200 million.

This work certainly started small, but it grew to incredible heights. "Ask yourself: What company, business, enterprise or institution ... ever experienced a steady growth averaging nearly 30 percent every year for decades? This activity did!" Mr. Armstrong wrote. "... It must be a record unmatched. It meant doubling in size and scope and power every 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ years. It meant *multiplying* itself in size eight times in every eight years, 64 times every 16 years, 4,096 times in 32 years!

"Most, if not all, major corporate institutions began with sizable capital. But this worldwide work started *giving* ..." (*ibid*). All of Mr. Armstrong's publications were given away free—just as we do with our magazine today.

One area of Mr. Armstrong's work that started particularly small—and yet one of his greatest contributions—was in the field of education.

Education With Vision

In 1947, Herbert Armstrong founded Ambassador College (AC) in Pasadena, California. AC was a liberal arts institution dedicated to teaching its students not simply how to make a living but how to live.

It was not a seminary or religious school, but it did rely on the Bible. In Mr. Armstrong's many years of study, he learned that the Bible is the foundation of all knowledge, and therefore, it was the foundation of the AC education.

Although the college started small, Mr. Armstrong could see the potential and need for it. "Would you really say it was a *college* that finally swung open its

door to students on Oct. 8, 1947? There were only four students!” he wrote. “There were no dormitories—no place for students to be in residence on the original little ‘campus’ of 1¾ acres. We had some books and encyclopedias on shelves in the one room that served as music room, assembly room, library, study room and lounge—but no real college library. There was no gymnasium, no track or athletic field” (ibid).

By the time of his death, the college had around 1,200 students. Far from the sparse early days of the 1¾ acres, the campus in Pasadena expanded to 40 acres and received multiple awards for being the most beautiful and pristine campus in America.

“In every way, Ambassador College is unique,” wrote Mr. Armstrong. “In magnificence of its campus—in the tone and character of its buildings and grounds—the physical setting in which it has produced tone and character in young men and women—Ambassador College is certainly unique in a world where education has drifted into materialism. Ambassador has dared to recapture the TRUE VALUES; to restore the most necessary MISSING DIMENSION in knowledge; to become a cultural *character-building* institution, concerned with moral, spiritual and ethical values as well as with the intellect. It started without money—with four students and eight members of faculty and administration. There have been no protest marches, no friction between students and faculty and administration, no hippie-type students. Ambassador is indeed unique!” (ibid).

Ambassador College truly was a remarkable institution that took a lot of vision to establish. Yet Mr. Armstrong never took credit for the vision himself; he always said that the “vision behind it” was inspired by God and the Bible.

Mr. Armstrong eventually established three college campuses and formed the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, which sponsored educational projects in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Jordan.

Mr. Armstrong’s vision and forward-thinking displayed on the campuses of Ambassador College impacted others. One such individual is the man known as “the father of modern Jerusalem”: Mayor Teddy Kollek.

Following the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, Kollek, “the greatest builder of Jerusalem since Herod the Great,” led the development and beautification of the city. He had a grand vision for Jerusalem, which was, in part, inspired by Mr. Armstrong and the beauty of the campuses of Ambassador College.

Mayor Kollek visited Mr. Armstrong at

the Pasadena campus in 1971. He later told Mr. Armstrong, “I am trying to follow your example, and make Jerusalem one of the most beautiful cities in the world.”

These two men had a wonderful relationship; it was a true friendship. They could often be seen walking arm in arm through the streets of Jerusalem. They had a mutual respect and admiration for the work of the other.

In 2007, Mr. Kollek sent a letter to AIBA founder Gerald Flurry, stating: “I do want to tell you how lovely it was to be reminded of Mr. Armstrong and our long and meaningful friendship. I had such high regard for this special man and his mission of peace. There have been very few people that I have known that I so enjoyed speaking with and so greatly admired and valued their counsel.”

For those of us who work for the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology and live in Jerusalem, this history is quite personal. We regularly walk by or take our children to play at Liberty Bell Park. Teddy Kollek built this park as part of his initiative to beautify Jerusalem and create a place at the center of the city for Arab and Jewish children to play together. Liberty Bell Park was an initiative of peace! Mr. Armstrong recognized this and sponsored a children’s playground at the entrance of the park.

“This park serves as a meeting point for all the people of Jerusalem and is a peaceful and tranquil center for the city,” Mr. Kollek wrote. “It is especially meaningful for me to remember Mr. Armstrong in connection with

Ambassador Auditorium



Liberty Bell Garden and his mission of peace.”

This park in the heart of Jerusalem should be a reminder to all who visit it of the mission and goal of Herbert W. Armstrong, the unofficial ambassador for world peace.

Ambassador for World Peace

Between the 1970s and 1980s, Herbert W. Armstrong met hundreds of world leaders—presidents, prime ministers, kings and ambassadors. He would sometimes travel 300 days out of the year. Mr. Armstrong didn't pursue these meetings; rather, these world leaders sought him out.

“The remarkable thing is that I did not seek or initiate these meetings—not once! I was invited,” Mr. Armstrong wrote in a co-worker letter on April 12, 1971. The next month he wrote: “So many high-level personal conferences could not have opened to one in private life, in so short a time, by mere happenstance. I could not have planned them and brought them about if I had tried!” (co-worker letter, May 28, 1971).

His humanitarian work and efforts toward world peace were so well known and well respected that these leaders invited him into their offices, homes and parliament buildings. Whether in private meetings or at banquets held in his honor, Mr. Armstrong's message was the same: a hopeful message of peace from the Bible.

Mr. Armstrong met with such distinguished individuals as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Belgium's King Leopold, Japan's Prince Mikasa, Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie, and the kings and queens of Thailand, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Nepal (see sidebar, page 9).

His greatest and most enduring relationships, however, were with the leaders of Israel. He met with five of Israel's prime ministers and four of its presidents.

Tourism Minister Moshe Kol was the first individual to invite Mr. Armstrong into a formal partnership in Israel.

Following Israel's 1948 War for Independence, Kol said he “had a dream to develop cooperation and promote friendship between Jewish and Arab youths in the newborn State of Israel. ... We had to begin anew—to build bridges between Jews and Arabs, to foster mutual understanding and knowledge of our different cultures” (*Plain Truth*, May 1984).

This dream became reality in 1960, when he founded the International Cultural Center for Youth (ICCY). By 1968, however, he needed more funding. That was when he approached Mr. Armstrong. As we write in our booklet *A Warm Friend of Israel*, “Mr. Kol saw the connection between Mr. Armstrong's life's work and the youth center.” Mr. Armstrong agreed to support the ICCY.

“In honor of his continued dedication to the programs and the goals of the ICCY,” Mr. Kol wrote, “and for his success in building bridges between leaders of nations to promote peace in the world, the Board of Directors of the ICCY has named the square at the entrance of the ICCY building in Jerusalem the Herbert W. Armstrong Square” (op cit). A dedication plaque with Mr. Armstrong's name on it can still be seen today.

As he was supporting Mr. Kol's and Mr. Kollek's projects in Jerusalem, one particular individual was taking note.

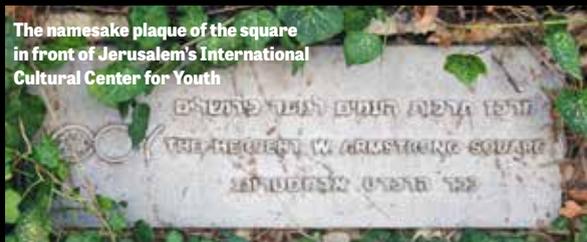
Mission of Peace

The first prime minister to invite Mr. Armstrong into a meeting was Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. She appreciated his work in Jerusalem and respected his message.

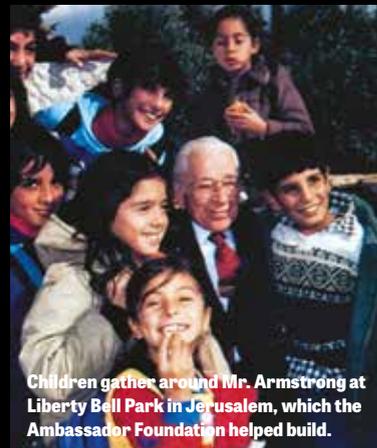
Ms. Meir herself was a woman of vision. Like Mr. Armstrong, she had



Herbert Armstrong and longtime friend Mayor Teddy Kollek stroll through the streets of Jerusalem discussing the problems facing the “city of peace.”



The namesake plaque of the square in front of Jerusalem's International Cultural Center for Youth



Children gather around Mr. Armstrong at Liberty Bell Park in Jerusalem, which the Ambassador Foundation helped build.



Israeli Minister of Tourism Moshe Kol and Herbert Armstrong share a warm embrace.



Mr. Armstrong meets with President Zalman Shazar.



Mr. Armstrong visits Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in his office in Jerusalem.



Mr. Armstrong (left) and Mayor Kollek (second from right), along with one of Mr. Armstrong's assistants and his wife, inspect the site in Liberty Bell Park for a children's playground, made possible by the Ambassador Foundation.



a mission of peace. After their 1971 meeting, Mr. Armstrong wrote to readers of the *Plain Truth*: “To her, peace is a very simple matter—if leaders and their peoples were willing to have it” (June 1971). She told Mr. Armstrong that she wanted to sit across the table from Israel’s neighbors and draw up a plan that would mutually benefit both Israelis and Arabs.

There is a way to bring “prosperity and happiness ... to this entire area of the world by peace,” she told Mr. Armstrong.

This was a similar message to what Mr. Armstrong had been proclaiming for decades. “For 40 years I have been presenting the subject to the world as a very simple one,” he wrote. “There is a *cause* for every effect. The way of life that will cause peace is what I term very simply as the ‘give’ way; and the world insists on living the ‘get’ way” (ibid).

Just a few years later, however, something unexpected happened. Mr. Armstrong called it “the most incredible peace overture of modern times” (*Plain Truth*, February 1981). It involved two of the most unlikely participants *giving* something for peace—and Herbert W. Armstrong was right at the center of it.

Peace at Mount Sinai

On Oct. 6, 1973, several Arab nations attacked Israel, commencing the Yom Kippur War. This war effort was led by Egypt and Syria. Egypt’s president at the time was Anwar Sadat. As the leader of the Arab world, Sadat would have been considered the most unlikely person to ever make peace with the Jewish state.

Yet just four years later, on Nov. 20, 1977, President Sadat stood before Israel’s Knesset and boldly said: “You would like to live with us in this region of the world, and

I tell you in all honesty that we welcome you among us.”

President Sadat’s speech electrified Mr. Armstrong. He wrote in the *Plain Truth* that Sadat “DECLARED PEACE, not war!”

“It was the most sensational overture toward international peace made by any head of state in our time!” he continued. “Consider Mr. Sadat’s position at the time. Egypt was the acknowledged leader of the Arab world. Headquarters of the Arab League was in Cairo. Mr. Sadat held high political prestige—perhaps the highest—in the Arab world. He braved furious opposition from all other Arab nations and their leaders in making this trip. It required vision, a sense of right against opposition, and extreme personal risk as well as political risk” (op cit).

Mr. Armstrong had the opportunity to meet and develop a close relationship with the two leaders who made this overture of peace possible: Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. In 1978, Begin and Sadat signed the Camp David Accords with United States President Jimmy Carter. However, years before working with Carter on this agreement, the two Middle Eastern leaders were meeting with Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Armstrong met with Sadat in 1974—three years before this stunning announcement and less than a year after the Yom Kippur War. Sadat was aware that Mr. Armstrong had close ties to the leaders of Israel, yet he still invited Mr. Armstrong into his country and held a private meeting with him. He invited Mr. Armstrong and



Mr. Armstrong presents a gift to Israeli President Yitzhak Navon.



Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin welcomes Mr. Armstrong in 1978.



Mr. Armstrong meets with Prime Minister Golda Meir in her office at the Knesset in 1971.



Mr. Armstrong meets with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.



Dr. Hatem, Sadat's close adviser, introduces Mr. Armstrong to over 300 leading Egyptians for an address in Cairo in 1980.

his staff to an event for important members of Egypt's government and society. Mr. Armstrong and his team were the only non-Arabs at the event.

Mr. Armstrong and Prime Minister Begin met on several occasions between 1977 and 1983. One such occasion on Nov. 3, 1980, shows just how much respect and admiration Israel's leaders had for this man.

While at a meeting with government

officials in Tel Aviv, Mr. Begin learned that Mr. Armstrong had arrived in Jerusalem. He stopped the meeting, excused himself, and drove one hour to Jerusalem. When a staff member of Mr. Begin's mentioned what he had done, the prime minister said, "Mr. Armstrong, I would get out of bed at 2 in the morning to see you." The level of respect and admiration these leaders had for this unofficial ambassador for world peace is inspiring.

In 1981, Sadat told Mr. Armstrong about his plans to build a world peace center at the base of Mount Sinai, land that Begin agreed to give to Egypt in exchange for peace. This peace center would have a mosque, synagogue and church—representing the goal of the project, which was to showcase peace among all nations and religions. Sadat's proposal was visionary. The location he chose for this peace center was significant: Mount Sinai, where God gave the law to the ancient Israelites (Exodus 19-20). As Mr. Armstrong always explained, that very law would have to be at the foundation of any true and lasting peace.

In 1971, Mr. Armstrong wrote, "There will have to be a CAUSE to produce peace. That cause is a WAY of life. ... It is the WAY of OUTGOING CONCERN for neighbor equal to self-concern" (*Plain Truth*, June 1971). As he often explained, that way is defined by the law given at Mount

Sinai. Mr. Armstrong could see that there was a true effort toward peace in this project. For that reason, he agreed to donate \$1 million to Sadat's plans.

Tragically, Sadat was assassinated on Oct. 6, 1981, and the Sinai project never materialized. As Mr. Armstrong wrote in February 1981, there was "extreme personal risk as well as political risk" in Sadat's plans. Yet for a short time, the way of give was in action—and peace was momentarily restored.

"Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat made serious sacrifices for this peace," Mr. Flurry wrote. "Prime Minister Begin gave up the massive buffer territory of the Sinai Peninsula. And President Sadat gave his life."

The ICCY, Liberty Bell Park and the Sinai Peace Center were worthwhile and valuable projects that Mr. Armstrong supported. His greatest and most enduring project, however, is ongoing to this day.

Iron-Bridge Partnership

Mr. Armstrong visited many cities, but he had a special affection for Jerusalem. During one four-year period, he visited Israel 50 times. Former IDF chief of staff and archaeologist Prof. Yigael Yadin "referred to my arrivals there as 'monthly visits,'" Mr. Armstrong wrote (co-worker letter, Aug. 19, 1976).

In the October 1976 *Plain Truth*, he wrote that "returning to Jerusalem seems like returning home." It would make sense then that it was within this city that one of his greatest partnerships began.

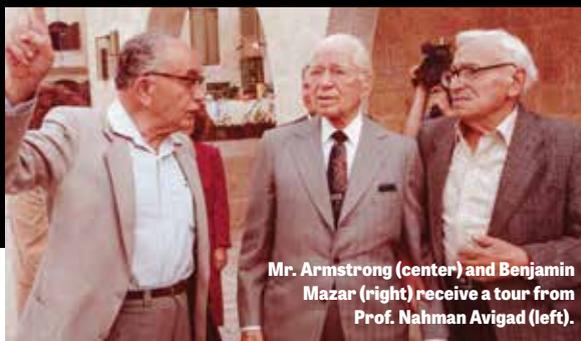
After Israel took possession of the Old City during the 1967 Six-Day War, Prof. Benjamin Mazar, former president of Hebrew University, began excavating near the Western Wall.



An Ambassador student excavates at the Ophel.



Prof. Benjamin Mazar with Ambassador College students



Mr. Armstrong (center) and Benjamin Mazar (right) receive a tour from Prof. Nahman Avigad (left).



Mr. Armstrong visits with Benjamin Mazar at the dig site.

In October 1968, Mr. Armstrong visited Jerusalem to inspect the excavation, which had started a few months prior. Mr. Armstrong wrote to his readers that this archaeological project was “much more impressive than I had expected. I began to realize the scientific and educational value to Ambassador College” (co-worker letter, May 28, 1971).

During that visit, Mr. Armstrong attended a luncheon in a private room at the Knesset with five high-ranking Israeli officials and Professor Mazar. At that meeting, Moshe Kol suggested that AC and Hebrew University form “an iron bridge that can never be broken.” Three other American universities were interested in joining the archaeological project. Yet that luncheon made clear that Israel’s government and Hebrew University wanted to partner with AC—and no one else.

“It was a most memorable luncheon,” Mr. Armstrong wrote. “The favor we were given in their eyes—the warmth of their attitude toward us—was inspiring, astonishing and most unusual.”

Mr. Armstrong could see that there was great value in this project. He knew the importance of Jerusalem. He also knew the importance of history as a teacher. He could see that one of the greatest ways to teach the history of God’s chosen city, Jerusalem, and the history of the Bible was by exposing that history through archaeology.

On Dec. 1, 1968, Mr. Armstrong visited Jerusalem and formalized the agreement. At the presidential palace, Mr. Armstrong met with Israeli President Zalman Shazar—the first head of state to extend an invitation to Mr. Armstrong. At that meeting, Shazar asked Mr. Armstrong if he wanted to put the relationship into writing with a formal contract. Mr. Armstrong simply

responded: “My word is good, and I believe yours is too, without any legal entanglements.”

Almost every year from that time forward until his death in 1986, Ambassador College sent 50 to 100 students to excavate in Israel.

Mr. Armstrong loved and deeply valued this iron-bridge partnership with Israel. He could see, as he wrote in 1969, that “[s]ome of the most valuable contributions to knowledge are being made today through archaeology” (*Plain Truth*, April 1969). But his devotion to this project wasn’t merely for the science or practice of archaeology. His vision of what AC was doing in Jerusalem went deeper than that. He knew they were digging in the very spot that King David’s throne once sat.

In that 1969 article, titled “Uncovering—3,000 Years of History,” Mr. Armstrong wrote: “The exact spot of that throne lies buried beneath, *at the very site of our present project!* It lies under these very ‘heaps’—buried by layer upon layer of the decay of buildings of generation after generation. ...

“This exciting and important project is gradually clearing off all the accumulated rubble, over the entire area, all the way down to the exact site of the THRONE OF DAVID!”

What vision this man had! We often point to Dr. Eilat Mazar as one who identified early on the location of David’s palace. In the January-February 1997 *Biblical Archaeology Review* she published her hypothesis that King David’s palace was in the



Benjamin Mazar affectionately kisses Mr. Armstrong at a luncheon.



An Ambassador student excavates at the Ophel.

northern end of the City of David. At the time, that was a revolutionary hypothesis.

Yet 30 years before her, Herbert W. Armstrong was proclaiming, *We are excavating in the very spot of David's palace!* He wrote to his readers in April 1971: "We are not only uncover-

ing 3,000 years of buried history. We are clearing off the accumulated rubble, decay and debris ... over the very THRONE OF DAVID ..."

In 1976, he repeated: "David took Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:1-13). Building David's house—from which he ruled (we are now digging down to find that location in the archaeological project)" (co-worker letter, August 19, 1976).

Mr. Armstrong had vision. He was a visionary in education. He was a visionary in what he understood about world peace. And he was a visionary when it came to archaeology. Not because of his own greatness, but because he took the Bible at its word. This was a quality of Mr. Armstrong that those closest to him could see very clearly and respected.

Bridges of Goodwill

In November 1974, Israeli officials hosted a banquet in Tel Aviv honoring Mr. Armstrong and his efforts toward world peace. Around 110 individuals were in attendance, including ambassadors from 16 countries.

In his opening comments, Mr. Kol said that Mr. Armstrong was "an outstanding personality, with wonderful connections all over the world"; he praised his efforts of "building bridges of goodwill" between nations. He then drew attention to his special

Between the 1970s and 1980s, Herbert W. Armstrong met with nearly 300 government officials, ambassadors, presidents, prime ministers, kings and emperors from 81 countries. While it would take too many pages to list each and every person with whom Mr. Armstrong met, below is a list of the most important and recognizable individuals.

George H. W. Bush Vice President of the United States

Nancy Reagan First Lady of the United States

Ronald Reagan President, Governor of California

George Schultz U.S. Secretary of State

Otto von Habsburg Head of the House of Habsburg

Rudolf Kirchschläger President of Austria

Prince Bernhard Husband of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands

King Leopold III King of Belgium

Prince Charles Prince of Wales

Princess Diana Princess of Wales

Margaret Thatcher Prime Minister of Britain

Prince Rainier III Prince of Monaco

Princess Grace Princess of Monaco

King Juan Carlos King of Spain

Hédi Nouira Prime Minister of Tunisia

Maati Bouabid Prime Minister of Morocco

J. J. Fouché President of South Africa

John Vorster Prime Minister of South Africa

King Sobhuza II King of Swaziland

Ian Smith Prime Minister of Zimbabwe

Haile Selassie Emperor of Ethiopia

Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub Prime Minister of Sudan

Yitzhak Artzi Vice Mayor of Tel Aviv, Knesset Member

Nahman Avigad Archaeology Professor

Joseph Aviram Hebrew University Archaeologist

Yigal Shiloh Director of the City of David archaeological project

Moshe Kol Minister of Tourism and Development

Teddy Kollek Mayor of Jerusalem

Golda Meir Prime Minister of Israel

Yitzhak Rabin Prime Minister of Israel

Menachem Begin Prime Minister of Israel

Yitzhak Shamir Prime Minister of Israel

Shimon Peres Prime Minister of Israel

Zalman Shazar President of Israel

Ephraim Katzir President of Israel

Yitzhak Navon President of Israel

Chaim Herzog President of Israel

Suleiman Frangieh President of Lebanon

Anwar Sadat President of Egypt

Hosni Mubarak President of Egypt

King Hussein King of Jordan

Queen Noor Queen of Jordan

King Saud King of Saudi Arabia

Mohammed Reza Pahlavi Shah of Iran

Indira Gandhi Prime Minister of India

King Birendra King of Nepal

Queen Aishwarya Queen of Nepal

King Bhumibol Adulyadej King of Thailand

Queen Sirikit Queen of Thailand

Nguyen Van Thieu President of Vietnam

Park Chung-hee President of South Korea

Emperor Hirohito Emperor of Japan

Prince Mikasa Prince of Japan

Prince Akihito Prince of Japan

Ferdinand Marcos President of the Philippines

relationship with Israel, saying that his “involvement ... in Israel is maybe more than in other countries.”

Mr. Armstrong’s special affection toward Israel wasn’t simply because of the Jewish people or the nation of Israel itself. It was because of what it pictures for all mankind. One man in particular at that banquet deeply understood this.

Prof. Benjamin Mazar opened his speech by drawing attention to the archaeological project, stating that it was “a privilege that this important project is continuously supported—technically, manually, morally, spiritually and, may I say in addition, *enthusiastically*—by a prominent institution of learning, Ambassador College, headed by its distinguished chancellor, Mr. Herbert Armstrong.”

He then delivered an inspiring summary of the goals and purpose of Mr. Armstrong’s life’s work. This is “an extraordinary occasion to say a few words about my dear friend, Mr. Armstrong,” he said. “He is rather a unique personality in a world of terrorism, animosity, prejudices and evil inclinations. Mr. Armstrong is a cosmopolitan in the best sense of the word, humanitarian, a sponsor of eternal, universal world ideas. He is a great believer in the ideas of world peace and brotherhood between nations and, therefore, he is often using the Hebrew term ‘shalom’ [meaning *peace*]. But primarily, he has firm faithfulness in the prophecy of Isaiah”

Professor Mazar then paraphrased Isaiah 2, which says: “And it shall come to pass in the end of days, That the mountain of the Lord’s house Shall be established as the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; And He will teach us of His ways, And we will

walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (verses 2-3). As a student and teacher of the Bible, Mr. Armstrong used scriptures like these when talking to heads of state. Such verses fueled Mr. Armstrong’s vision. This is what motivated him to travel up to 300 days out of the year when he was in his 80s and 90s.

As Mr. Flurry explained in the November-December 2022 *Let the Stones Speak*, Professor Mazar used this banquet to make public why Mr. Armstrong supported biblical archaeology and why he met world leaders. Mr. Armstrong understood that prophecies like Isaiah 2 contain an incredible message of hope—and the world needs that hope.

He met world leaders so they would take that message to their people. He supported biblical archaeology to uncover the truth of the Bible and inspire all mankind with that truth. He also deeply understood that Jerusalem was God’s chosen city (e.g. 2 Chronicles 6:6; 1 Kings 11:13; Zechariah 2:16). And, therefore, he valued the work that his organization and college were accomplishing in Jerusalem.

“Mr. Armstrong loves and admires Jerusalem,” Mazar continued, “and wholeheartedly he believes in the future of Israel and the Holy City, and for him ... the united Jerusalem is not only the metropolis of Israel and the spiritual center of the monotheistic religions, but also the symbol of the great past and the hope for a better future of mankind.”



Armstrong students and staff pose with Dr. Eilat Mazar following the 2018 excavation.



The Legacy Continues

The Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology (AIBA), led by Gerald Flurry, is continuing Herbert Armstrong's work in Jerusalem today. After Mr. Armstrong died, Professor Mazar said, "His name will always be attached to this most important [archaeological] undertaking carried out in Jerusalem."

Since 2006, his name has literally been attached to Jerusalem's archaeology as Herbert W. Armstrong College and the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology have continued his legacy by excavating within the City of David and on the Ophel.

This is obviously important history for those of us at AIBA. But why is this important to you?

Consider what Mr. Flurry wrote in that 2022 article: "World peace is certainly a noble cause. I believe those Israeli leaders [who met Mr. Armstrong] were trying very hard to bring the world closer to peace. Prime Minister Meir said, 'What we need most of all is peace.' What can we do if we lack peace? Without peace, we tear one another apart! Somehow we must learn to have peace and have hope. The Bible is full of statements about that. I believe Herbert W. Armstrong and these Israeli leaders can teach us some important and invaluable lessons."

Understanding how Mr. Armstrong and these leaders worked together and talked to one another is a great example of how to have peace. At a time when the world is talking about peace, it's important to ponder this man who lived a life in the pursuit of true, lasting peace.

What he was able to accomplish was unique and unusual. "[W]hy do heads of state—kings,

presidents, prime ministers of many governments around the world—invite personal meetings with a private citizen of my status? Why do governments officially confer highest honors on such a private alien?" Mr. Armstrong asked. "[T]his reversing of trends, ways and procedures has not been that of *my* devising. As I look back over the years, I can only shake my head in wonderment. I have not done these things—no man could. I cannot take credit. Yet paradoxically, I have been privileged to have the leading part in these activities" (*Autobiography*).

Mr. Armstrong lived a long, productive life. Pondering the life of this man and all that he accomplished brings to memory the quote from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "The person must be blind, indeed, who cannot see, that here on Earth a great project, a great plan, is executed ... of which we participate as faithful servants."

Those of us at the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology are inspired by and thankful for Herbert W. Armstrong and his legacy—and the "great project" that he was a part of. Forty years on from his death, we're honored to be able to say that we've continued his legacy and continued what he believed was "the most important archaeological excavation of our time." Under the leadership of Gerald Flurry, we've striven to make sure his name remains attached to that project and are proud to do so. As Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, a man who worked with AC students in the City of David, told our staff at a brunch last spring: "A lot of archaeologists have come and gone in Jerusalem, but the one name that remains constant is *Armstrong*." ■



The Ophel excavation site



Armstrong students excavate the City of David in 2006.



Armstrong students excavate the Ophel in 2023.



Gerald Flurry with Eilat Mazar in Jerusalem



A Japanese Prince, Herbert Armstrong, and an Unlikely Partnership in Biblical Archaeology

Recognizing the ‘holy bridge ...
between East and West’ BY MIHAILO S. ZEKIC

PRINCE TAKAHITO MIKASA (1915–2016), THE younger brother of Japan’s late Emperor Hirohito, lived an accomplished life. He fought in World War II, spoke at least three languages, and taught history courses at several Japanese universities. He was a noted scholar and became an accomplished ice dancer. But what may be some of the most defining aspects of his legacy were his outreaches to the Middle East—especially Israel. It was through these that he formed a remarkable biblical archaeology partnership, and *friendship*, with our namesake, Herbert W. Armstrong.

Prince Mikasa was a cavalry officer during the Japanese invasion of China just prior to World War II. He went there to serve his empire, but he became disillusioned with war after seeing how cruelly the Japanese troops were treating the Chinese. In China, he “had completely lost faith in the ‘sacred war’ and the only

thing I wanted was peace,” he wrote in 1956. Seeing “the abominable atrocities committed against the innocent Chinese people” made him disillusioned with the country he belonged to. He even contemplated forfeiting his royal title and becoming a commoner.

Escapism led him to scholastics. He was originally interested in European civilization. But in studying the origins of Christianity, Prince Mikasa was introduced to the study of the Jews. This changed his life. According to Arnold Wolf, an American rabbi who heard the prince speak at a Hanukkah reception in Tokyo, Prince Mikasa “discovered one supreme fact; that the Jews were the key to Western civilization.” The prince saw that Jews had a heritage both in Western and Eastern culture. He saw the Jews as “the holy bridge ... between East and West. Through understanding Judaism, the prince regained a sense of dignity as a member of his people; he was again proud to be Japanese.”



Herbert W. Armstrong enjoys a light moment with Prince Mikasa of Japan and officials of the Mideast Cultural Center in Tokyo as they examine artifacts the Ambassador Foundation helped the center to acquire.

Prince Mikasa's new love for the Jews spurred him to different ventures. He learned how to speak Hebrew fluently. He served as president of the Jerusalem conference for the International Association for the History of Religions in 1968. And the discipline he devoted himself to most was Middle Eastern archaeology.

In 1954, he founded the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan, one of the pioneering institutions to introduce Middle Eastern archaeology to Japanese scholarship. In 1956, he sponsored the first Japanese archaeological excavation in the Middle East at the site of Telul eth-Thalathat in Iraq. The prince himself was present for the groundbreaking ceremony.

The prince's interest in archaeology was shared with a friend of his, Herbert W. Armstrong (who also had a close relationship with members of Japan's Diet, or parliament, who affectionately called themselves his "sons"). Over the course of his world travels—including to Japan—Mr. Armstrong got to know Prince Mikasa well. This relationship between Mr. Armstrong and Prince Mikasa blossomed into a special collaboration. In 1970, Mr. Armstrong and Prof. Benjamin Mazar of Hebrew University hosted an archaeological exhibition in Tokyo. In a May 29, 1973, co-worker letter, Mr. Armstrong announced the plans for an "Ambassador Institute of Biblical Research" operated jointly with the prince. (Those plans never materialized.) Mr. Armstrong's Ambassador College also supported the ongoing Japanese excavations at Israel's Tel Zeror.

Tel Zeror is an ancient city located in Israel's north on a trade route between the Mediterranean port of Dor and Samaria, the ancient capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. The Society for Near Eastern Studies

in Japan first started digging there in 1964, directed by the University of Tokyo's Prof. Emeritus Kiyoshi Ohata, with Prince Mikasa as one of the dig's benefactors.

Tel Zeror is composed of two tels (artificial mounds made up of various strata from ancient civilizations) located next to each other. The first stratum uncovered revealed a medieval Muslim cemetery; further work revealed that the layers of occupation continued all the way to the Middle Bronze Age (circa 1950–1650 B.C.E.). The society's three seasons concluded in 1966. Their fourth, in 1974, was cosponsored by Ambassador College. This was one of two archaeological projects in Israel sponsored by Ambassador College; the other, more famously, was in Jerusalem in conjunction with Hebrew University and Professor Mazar (the decade-long Temple Mount "Big Dig"; see article, page 8).

Mr. Armstrong's relationship with the people of Japan wasn't limited to Prince Mikasa. Through the course of his long life, Mr. Armstrong met with seven different Japanese prime ministers and was even given an audience with Emperor Hirohito himself. Ambassador College accepted Japanese students, including those sponsored by Japan's Ministry of Education. In 1973, Mr. Armstrong was awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure, the second-highest honor the government could bestow on an individual at the time.

Mr. Armstrong died in 1986, but his legacy in Israel lives on with our institute and archaeological work in Jerusalem. As with Prince Mikasa, the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology believes the Jews' ancient heritage can serve as a bridge—not only between Western civilization and the East but for all mankind. ■

TOP 10 BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY DISCOVERIES OF

2025

From an Exodus-period pharaoh's tomb to a depiction of one of Jerusalem's greatest kings—here are the new discoveries that caught our eye. **BY ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE STAFF**

Another year has flown by, and it has been a big one in the world of biblical archaeology. From ancient shipwrecks to an Egyptian fortress and New Kingdom Period tomb, as well as new research relating to two of Judah's notably righteous kings—Hezekiah and Josiah—2025 brought us many new and exciting discoveries illustrating the biblical account. Here are our top 10 picks from 2025.

10

Exodus-Period Fortress in Sinai

The most direct route out of Egypt and into the Promised Land the Israelites could have taken would have been northeast along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea—an ancient trade route known as the “Ways of Horus” or “Way of the Land of the Philistines.” God, however, instructed the Israelites to take a *southern* route “by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea” (Exodus 13:18). Why? “... God led them *not* by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said: ‘Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt’” (verse 17). A recent archaeological discovery supports this.

In November, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities announced the discovery of a 3,500-year-old Egyptian military fortress at Tell el-Kharouba (northern Sinai), most likely built by Thutmose I (late 16th century B.C.E.). This military base, which covers an area of about 8,000 square meters (86,000 square feet), represents one of the largest fortification structures on Egypt's eastern border. The line of just its southern wall has been revealed to a length of over 100 meters (300 feet), supporting 11 towers. Tell el-Kharouba represents one of 11 known fortresses built along this route, reemphasizing the reason for Israel's detour on the way out of Egypt—“lest peradventure the people repent when they see war.”

To learn more, read our article “3,500-Year-Old Egyptian Fortress Uncovered” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1354).



Egyptian fortress
at Tell el-Kharouba

9

Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo

One of the most shocking events in the history of the biblical nation of Judah was the untimely death of one of its most righteous leaders, King Josiah (circa 609 B.C.E.), in what seemed to be the most unnecessary of circumstances: battling Egyptian Pharaoh Necho (Neco II) at Megiddo, a location far outside the territory of Judah (2 Chronicles 35:20-25).

In January, a report published in the *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* revealed the first evidence from Tel Megiddo substantiating this biblical account. Within Building 16 of Area X, excavators uncovered a late seventh-century B.C.E. structure full of pottery vessels imported from *Egypt*—the highest quantity ever discovered in the region. According to one of the lead researchers, Prof. Israel Finkelstein, the crudely made wares point to a “steady stream of supplies from Egypt, most likely for Necho’s army” stationed at the site, thus giving credence to the biblical account of a battle taking place at this location with these Egyptian forces.

To learn more, read “King Josiah’s Last Stand” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1240).



Selected Egyptian pottery from Area X at Tel Megiddo

8

Dor Shipwreck Cargoes

The ancient port city of Dor, mentioned half a dozen times in the biblical account, was once a wealthy city due to extensive Mediterranean trade. More than 20 ancient ships and cargoes lie off its coast. In August, a new report in *Antiquity* described the results of the 2023–2024 excavation of three Iron Age ship cargoes.

Cargo M, which dated to the Iron Age I period (11th century B.C.E.) bore evidence of extensive trade with other locations, including Egypt, Cyprus and Phoenicia, including an anchor incised with Cypro-Minoan script. The other two cargoes were surprisingly dated to Iron Age II and III—both

were originally thought to date to the later Persian Period. Cargo L1, which dated to circa 800 B.C.E., was interpreted as reflecting a “decline in imports” and “weaker maritime connections”—this conclusion was based on its insular and substantially less-exotic cargo. The Bible describes this as a time of reversals and “affliction” for the northern kingdom of Israel, just prior to the reign of Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:26). Cargo L2, which dated to around 600 B.C.E. during a period of Assyrian dominance of the region, reflected international trade picking up once more.

To learn more, read our article “Three Ancient Wrecks Analyzed Off Israelite Coast” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1271).



Divers use sand dredgers to excavate at Dor Beach.



El Ahwat during the 2024 excavation season

7

Davidic-Era Bronze Production

In August, researchers from the University of Haifa published their analysis of the earliest evidence of bronze production in Israel at el-Ahwat, a site in the Central Hill Country. The metal artifacts the study was based on were uncovered decades ago by the late Adam Zertal but had been left in a box in his office. They were eventually discovered by one of the researchers. Analysis of the bronze slag showed copper was alloyed with tin on site, revealing a high level of expertise within an evidently centralized system capable of securing and providing the raw materials needed for production.

Based on the date of the artifacts—the turn of the first millennium B.C.E.—the researchers revealed that bronzemaking at the site specifically linked el-Ahwat to the Timna and Faynan copper mines, with ores coming from each. Comparative studies between these Edomite mines have shown that around 1000 B.C.E. both locations experienced identical changes in copper production. The Bible describes this period as a time when the united monarchy exerted control over Edom during the reign of David: “[A]ll the Edomites became servants to David” (2 Samuel 8:14). The presence of such copper far to the north, within the heartland of Israel, as well as expertise for on-site alloying, could be representative of the control and development ascribed in the biblical account to the united monarchy.

To learn more, read our article “Bronze Production in Central Israel—Evidence of David’s Kingdom?” ([ArmstrongInstitute.org/1347](https://armstronginstitute.org/1347)).



Alabaster fragments from Thutmose II's tomb, inscribed with his name

6

Thutmose II Tomb

The discovery of the tomb of a pharaoh is a holy grail moment—and none more so than for a tomb of Egypt’s golden age, the New Kingdom Period (circa 1550–1070 B.C.E.). The discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in 1922 stands out as a case in point. A little more than a century on, in a February 2025 Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities announcement, it was confirmed: The royal tomb of Pharaoh Thutmose II had been discovered.

Thutmose II (1512–1504 B.C.E., high chronology) was the son of Thutmose I; husband of

5

Servant of Josiah Bulla

Another discovery relating to King Josiah makes our Top 10 list this year: a bulla (clay seal impression) that likely belonged to one of his servants mentioned in the Bible. In July, the Temple Mount Sifting Project—an initiative that painstakingly sifts through tons of earth illegally bulldozed from Jerusalem’s Temple Mount by the Islamic Waqf in the late 1990s—announced the new discovery.

Meant to seal a bag or storage container, the late seventh-to-early-sixth-century B.C.E. seal impression reads, “Belonging to Yed[a]yah (son of) Asayahu.” Asayahu represents a slightly longer theophoric version of the biblical name Asaiah (with the longer ending *-yahu*, rather than *-iah* or *-yah*—note that both forms can be used interchangeably). The Bible mentions Asaiah as a servant of King Josiah dispatched

Egypt's greatest female pharaoh, Hatshepsut; and father of arguably the greatest pharaoh of all time, Thutmose III. Ironically, Thutmose II was relatively unimpressive—and so was his tomb. His mummy and its later reburial location at Deir el-Bahari had already been discovered in 1881. The whereabouts of his original tomb, however, was unknown. This was finally discovered at Wadi C, cut into the base of a cliff. It bore the giveaway ceiling map and friezes of a royal pharaonic burial, but it was almost empty.

Evidence showed that at some point soon after construction, it was damaged by flooding due to a nearby waterfall, and the goods had been subsequently relocated. Only a few alabaster fragments found in the tomb, bearing the name of Thutmose II, ultimately led to its secure identification. Still, the discovery of any tomb in any state relating to Egypt's fabled New Kingdom Period is huge, leading the director of the search to "burst into tears" following its discovery. (For Thutmose II's possible connection to the Exodus, read our article "Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?" at ArmstrongInstitute.org/882.)

To learn more, read "A Once-in-a-Century Find" (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1205).



Excavation director Dr. Ayala Zilberstein holds the Assyrian inscription.

4

Assyrian Tribute Demand

In October, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of the first-ever First Temple Period Assyrian inscription in Jerusalem. The miniature 2.5-centimeter cuneiform inscription was found while wet-sifting earth from the ongoing excavations adjacent the southwest corner of the Temple Mount.

While the inscription was found within a later period fill, its Akkadian script dates paleographically to somewhere within the eighth to seventh centuries B.C.E., and petrographic analysis of its clay reveals it to have been made somewhere within Mesopotamia's Tigris Basin, where Assyria's power centers were located. The text on the inscription, while extremely fragmentary, contains a demand for a late payment of tribute "by the first of Av"—or else. Given the dating window, the reigns of Judean kings Hezekiah and Manasseh span most of this period in question and are both described in the Bible as being under the yoke of Assyria (e.g. 2 Kings 18:7; 2 Chronicles 33:11)—with Hezekiah notably refusing to pay tribute, leading to Sennacherib's famously fateful invasion of Judah.

To learn more, read "A 2,700-Year-Old Assyrian Inscription Demanding Tribute Found in Jerusalem" (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1353).



The "Yed[ā]yah (son of) Asayahu" bulla

to visit "Huldah the prophetess" to learn of the fate of Judah and Jerusalem's prophesied destruction (2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34). If this bulla does indeed refer to one and the same Asaiah, then Yedaiah would represent his son. Though it is impossible to be 100 percent certain about the identification, the researchers call it "highly plausible" due to the parallel name, dating, Jerusalem location and the fact that such administrative seals were only held by those in high positions of authority.

To learn more, read our article "First Temple Period Bulla Discovered—Could It Reference King Josiah's Servant?" (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1260).

3

Redating the Dead Sea Scrolls

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls trove in the late 1940s and early '50s set off an earthquake in the archaeological and biblical studies communities. It remains arguably the greatest discovery in biblical archaeology. In the decades since, various paleographic and limited carbon-dating approaches have been used to date the trove, placing the bulk of the material between the second century B.C.E. and second century C.E. Now, AI technology is joining the fray—and revealing that many of the scrolls actually should be dated much *earlier*.

Carbon-dating the many thousands of fragments—a destructive, laborious, time-consuming and incredibly expensive process—is a virtually impossible task. And

manual paleographic dating of the scrolls is an equally cumbersome, much less-than-precise task, prone to biases. As an alternative, researchers developed an AI program named Enoch, trained on two dozen securely carbon-dated scroll samples, and then let loose on 135 other samples in the trove—the computer technology more readily able to detect minute differences and flourishes in script. The results were that “Enoch’s style-based predictions are *often older than traditionally assumed paleographic estimates*, leading to a new chronology of the scrolls and the redating of ancient Jewish key texts that contribute to current debates on Jewish and Christian origins,” wrote Mladen Popović et al. in their June publication

in *PLOS One* (emphasis added). Examples include fragments of the books of Samuel and Jeremiah redated to the fourth century B.C.E.; Ecclesiastes to earlier within the third century B.C.E. (and thus challenging minimalist theories about the very late authorship of this book); and a section of the book of Daniel pertaining to prophecy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, long believed to have been written after the events at hand (the 160s B.C.E.), returning a date range of 230–160 B.C.E. Such an early date range has drawn criticism as “proof” that Enoch is dating fragments too early; either that, or perhaps the text really is prophetic.

To learn more, read our article “Redating the Dead Sea Scrolls” ([ArmstrongInstitute.org/1277](https://armstronginstitute.org/1277)).

Great Isaiah Scroll

2

Jerusalem Dam and Reservoir

At the conclusion of our 2023 top 10 list, in looking forward to future discoveries, we noted the ongoing Birkat el-Hamra/Siloam Pool excavations “some sorely flawed ‘reporting’ about the site, including that the team has found ‘almost nothing.’ What they *have* found is actually extremely interesting and will reshape our understanding of this lower part of the City of David.” The team, led by Dr. Nahshon Szanton, has kept a tight lid on their discoveries—and finally, two years later, we can share one of several major new discoveries, making it all the way to No. 2 in our list for 2025: an early dam and reservoir, dating much earlier than expected—circa 800 B.C.E.

Along the southeast edge of the pool, a monumental reservoir and dam wall was discovered measuring 12 meters high, 8 meters wide and 21 meters long (note that the wall continues further, but has only been exposed to this length)—part of a much earlier Iron Age phase of the famous later Herodian structure. Carbon-dating of several organic remains found throughout the structure revealed surprisingly

Massive ancient water reservoir discovered in the City of David



Workers clean the plastered wall of the dam.



1

Assyrian Depiction of Jerusalem and Hezekiah

Stephen Compton, Ph.D. candidate of the University of South Africa, was featured in last year's No. 3 spot for his novel research identifying the location of Sennacherib's camps at Lachish and Jerusalem. At the time, we told our readers, "While the Lachish identification is the most likely, Compton has had his detractors. But stay tuned because there is something along these lines coming down the pipeline that is quite remarkable." With the publication of his latest research finally coming out in the October issue of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*—"Sennacherib's Throne-Room Reliefs: On Jerusalem and the Misplaced City of Ushu"—we have our No. 1 entry for 2025: The identification of Jerusalem and Hezekiah on Slab 28 of Sennacherib's Nineveh wall reliefs.

This identification had already been tentatively proposed by Christoph Uehlinger in 2003, concluding at the time that the "identification of Jerusalem on slab I-28 cannot as yet be positively proven." Compton's new research builds on Uehlinger's research from an entirely novel approach, rendering the identification of Jerusalem and Hezekiah virtually certain—thus making Slab 28 our earliest depiction of Jerusalem, preceding the Madaba Map by more than 1,200 years.

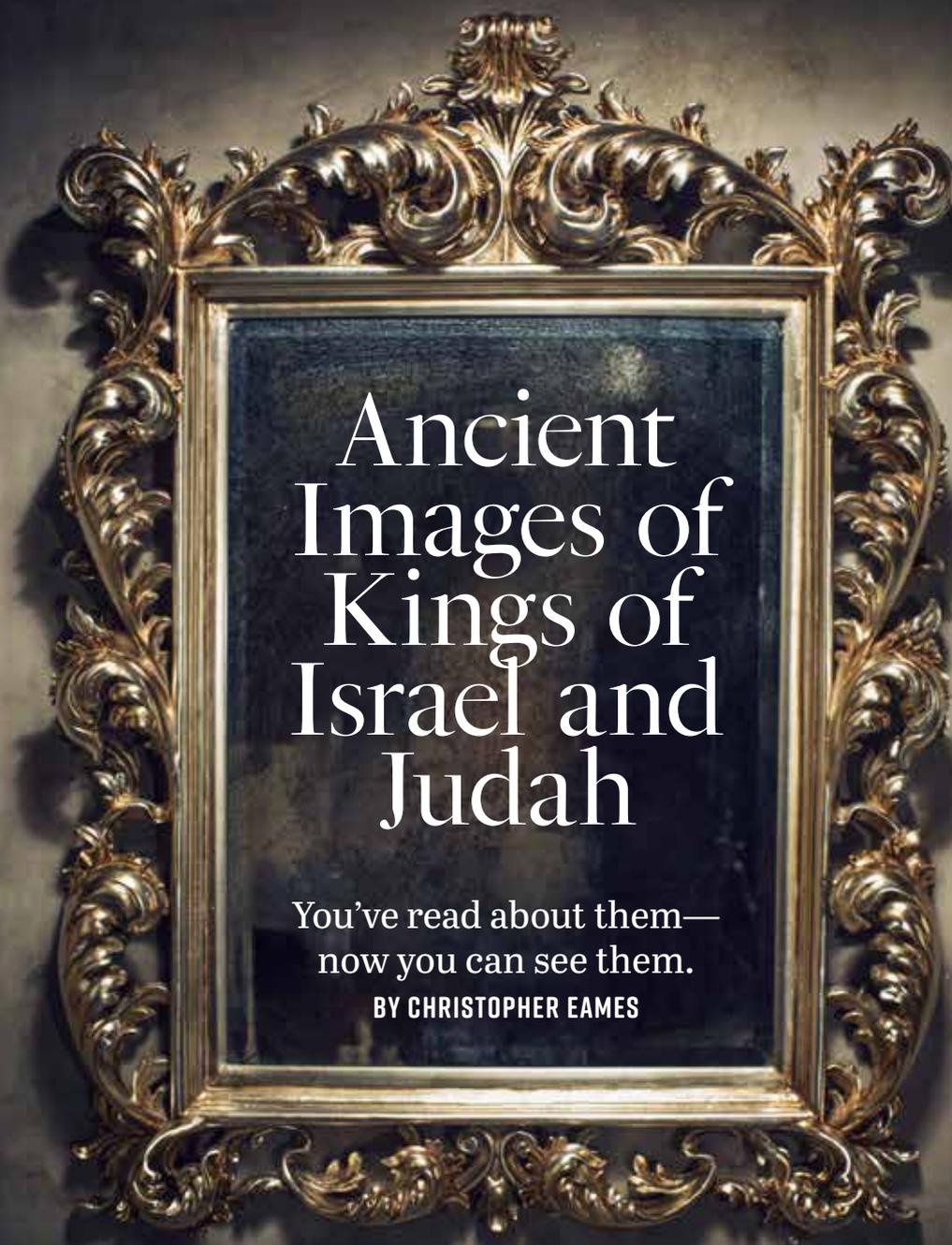
Interestingly, unlike Uehlinger, Compton was not trying to find Jerusalem on the wall reliefs, but rather another city entirely—the Phoenician city Ushu. This quest drew his focus to other prominent cities depicted on the wall reliefs of Sennacherib's palace, including the biblical city of Gath/Tell es-Safi and the city depicted on Slab 28. He noted several lines of evidence backing the identity of the latter as a Judahite city, including its twice-corbeled battlements, it being upon two hills, and the form of banner held by the lone representative figure contained within the city—for whom, on the basis of this as Jerusalem, there can be little doubt as representing "Hezekiah ... shut up in Jerusalem like a caged bird," in the words of Sennacherib's prism inscriptions.

This new research was featured as the cover story of our November-December 2025 issue of *Let the Stones Speak*. To learn more, read our article "Revealed: A 2,700-Year-Old Depiction of Jerusalem and Hezekiah?" (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1382) and check out *Let the Stones Speak* podcast host Brent Nagtegaal's interview with Compton on YouTube, "Revealed: A 2,700-Year-Old Depiction of Jerusalem and King Hezekiah?"

We look forward to what 2026 will bring!

consistent dates, all pointing to the end of the Iron II A period—much earlier than expected, with the general assumption being that this pool was first built at the time of Hezekiah (around a century later), together with the construction of the Siloam Tunnel. The radiocarbon research, conducted by Dr. Johanna Regev and Prof. Elisabetta Boaretto of the Weizmann Institute, was published in September in the journal *PNAS*. The discovery is forcing a rethink of the development of ancient Jerusalem, including calling into question the very identification of this as the "Siloam Pool"—with the excavators proposing it instead as "Solomon's Pool" of classical literature, and the Siloam Pool as another one further northwest, directly connected to the end of the Siloam Tunnel. If this interpretation is correct, we would actually be returning to the original theories for the location and identities of these pools.

To learn more, read "Massive Ancient Water Reservoir Discovered in the City of David" (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1345), which makes the case for the site's original construction perhaps going back to the time of the pool's namesake.



Ancient Images of Kings of Israel and Judah

You've read about them—
now you can see them.

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

“**T**O ILLUSTRATE THE BIBLE”—THAT WAS THE CALLING card of biblical archaeology in its formative years. This sentiment was perhaps most notably articulated in an 1865 speech delivered by Archbishop William Thomson at the first meeting of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF). Readers of the Bible were thousands of years—and thousands of kilometers—removed from places and events described. The work of biblical archaeologists was “not ... to launch controversy” (ironic, given the last century and a half of debate)—but rather to “apply the rules of science ... to an investigation into the facts concerning the Holy Land.”

“[N]o country more urgently requires illustration,” he said.

Of course, Thomson was speaking figuratively of the intent to bring the Bible to life for readers, through discovery and excavations of locations and events relevant to the biblical account. Certainly, there would have been little thought of *literal* illustrations of the famous biblical rulers of the Holy Land.

Yet that is what we now have—a growing body of likely and near-likely contemporary depictions of *actual rulers of Israel and Judah*.

You've read about them—now you can see them.

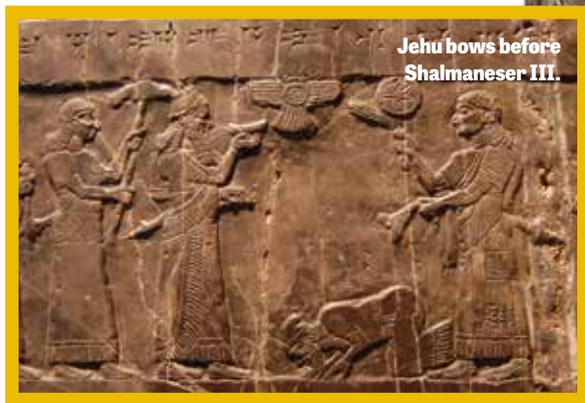
Jehu

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III is one of the most famous artifacts in biblical archaeology. Found in Nimrud (northern Iraq) in 1846 and displayed prominently within the British Museum, this nearly 2-meter-tall artifact, dating to circa 825 B.C.E., is covered with 20 panels depicting subdued kings and tribute being brought before the Assyrian king.

During this time, Jehu was ruler of Israel (circa 842–815 B.C.E.). The inscription directly mentions him, and another king of Israel: “The tribute of *Jehu*, son of Omri: I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king [and] spears.”

This text serves as header to a panel below, depicting the king offering the tribute in question. “The submission of [Samaria] is shown ... where ‘Jehu, son of Omri’ bows before Shalmaneser” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Shalmaneser III”).

Jehu, per the biblical account, is clearly not a “son of Omri”; instead, he rose to power in a coup and ended the Omride dynasty. This surely would have meant little to the Assyrian king (who may not have



Jehu bows before Shalmaneser III.

been aware of political wranglings within Israel). In fact, the standard Assyrian name for “Israel” was “House of Omri”—a territorial name that continued into the late eighth century B.C.E., when the land of Israel was finally conquered and the residents taken captive.

For more on Jehu, his depiction on the Black Obelisk, and the crucial role this artifact plays for biblical chronology, read “The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser and the Earliest Depiction of an Israelite” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/128) and “Dating the United Monarchy to the 10th Century B.C.E.” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1000).

Manasseh

Judah’s King Manasseh was the longest-reigning king of either Israel or Judah (2 Kings 21:1). His 55-year reign spanned most of the first half of the seventh century B.C.E. (circa 697–642 B.C.E.). He is famous for his rank rebellion against God—worse than all who came before him—even “worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Chronicles 33:9; King James Version). As a result, partway through his long reign, Manasseh was taken captive by “the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh *among the thorns*, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon” (verse 11; KJV).

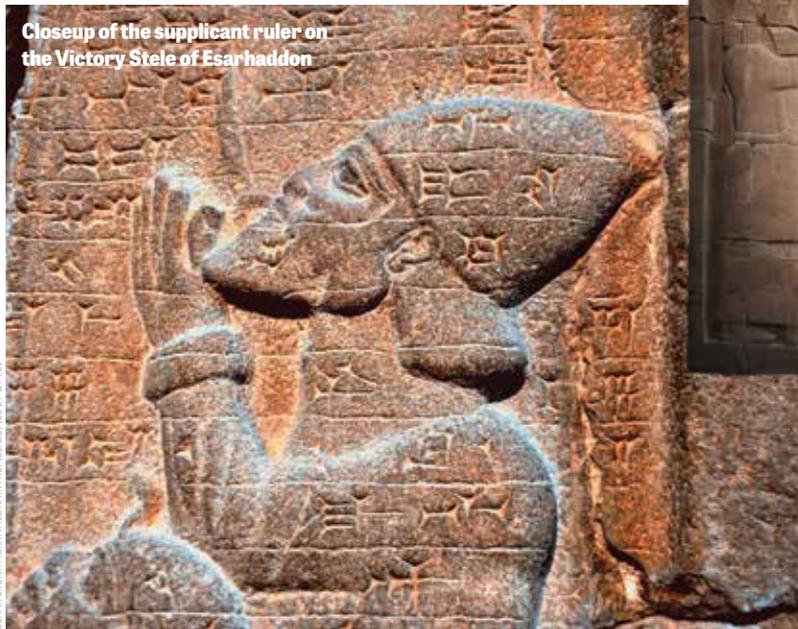
This unusual language actually refers to *hooks* placed in the nose, mouth or cheeks. The Jewish Publication Society translation reads, more generally, “took Manasseh with hooks”; the Amplified Bible says, “they captured Manasseh with hooks (through his nose or cheeks) ... and took him to Babylon” (for more detail, see ArmstrongInstitute.org/386). The account then describes Manasseh’s repentance while in captivity, and his later reinstatement in Jerusalem.

The biblical account does not name the Assyrian king responsible for Manasseh’s imprisonment, but it is a good chronological fit with the reign of Esarhaddon. From his reign, we have a massive 3.5-meter-tall victory inscription, the Victory Stele of Esarhaddon, which commemorates his victories in Egypt in 671 B.C.E. (the stele was constructed soon after).

The stele, discovered at Zincirli Höyük (southern Turkey) in 1888 and on display in Berlin’s Pergamon Museum, is covered with cuneiform text describing Esarhaddon’s vengeance against Kushite-ruled Egypt, governed by Pharaoh Taharqa, a figure mentioned elsewhere in the biblical account (2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9). The stele text is directly carved onto a prominent depiction of a larger-than-life Esarhaddon. He stands above two much smaller captive rulers, holding onto them by a leash. The smaller figure is a Kushite, Prince Ushankhuru (son and heir of Taharqa), whom Esarhaddon describes as being carted away. (An alternate opinion is that this represents Taharqa himself.)

Of more interest for our purposes is the slightly larger, unnamed standing figure. Based on his appearance, this is clearly a Levantine ruler. Varying theories include identifying him perhaps with either a Phoenician ruler of Sidon (Abdi-Milkutti) or of Tyre (Baal I). Yet this is only speculative, as neither king nor territory is mentioned on the stele. (Besides Egypt,





Closeup of the supplicant ruler on the Victory Stele of Esarhaddon

OSAMA SHUKR/MOHAMMED AMIN/FOTOLIAS/CC BY-SA 4.0



RICHARD MOPPEL/CC BY 2.0

well as in iconography. There is even an inscription referencing “Yahweh of Samaria.” As such, site excavator Ze’ev Meshel (1932–2024) believed the outpost to have operated under the control of the northern kingdom of Israel, rather than Judah. The single-use site operated during a very brief period around 800 B.C.E.

The king of Israel on the scene at this time was Jehoash (805–790 B.C.E., also spelled Joash)—predecessor to the perhaps better-known Jeroboam II. It was during Jehoash’s reign that significant conflict took place with Judah’s King Amaziah, in which the Judahite king was beaten back, Jerusalem

besieged, and the temple ransacked (2 Kings 14; 2 Chronicles 25)—thus giving Jehoash de facto control over the southern kingdom, also helping to explain the Israelite presence at this single-use Sinai outpost southwest of the kingdom of Judah.

Esarhaddon only speaks more generally about subduing “unsubmissive princes.” A closer inspection of the face of this Levantine king reveals it to have been apparently pierced through with some kind of hook or ring and attached to the leash that the Assyrian king is holding.

Which Levantine king could this be other than the very one described as having been hooked somehow through the face by an Assyrian king and led away captive around this very time? This would be about midway through King Manasseh’s reign. And while the primary focus of the victory stele’s inscription is Assyria’s defeat of Egypt, other inscriptions of Esarhaddon mention Manasseh, including payment of tribute from this king of Judah. It is easy to imagine a scenario in which the Assyrian army passed through the land of Judah on the way to or from battle with Egypt, demanding recompense from the Judahite king for perhaps failing to meet tributary requirements. And the sense from the biblical text is that Manasseh was simply handed over, rather than forcibly taken via prolonged siege.

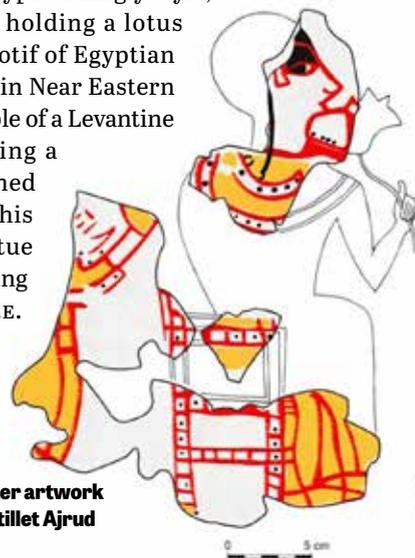
For more on Manasseh and Esarhaddon, read “King Manasseh’s ‘Nose Hooks,’ in the Bible and Archaeology” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/386) and “Esarhaddon Prism Proves King Manasseh” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/160).

Jehoash

Kuntillet Ajrud is a peculiar Iron Age outpost located within the Sinai. While this site is technically closer to the territory of the kingdom of Judah, it bears more connection with the kingdom of Israel, both in names and textual style of inscriptions discovered at the site, as

Among the circa 800 B.C.E. inscriptions and drawings found at Kuntillet Ajrud was a painted plaster portrait, generalized as depicting a seated Near Eastern king. The late Prof. Pirhiya Beck, in a posthumously published article, went further, identifying this as a “king of either Israel or of Judah” (“The Art of Palestine During the Iron Age II”). Based on this as an Israelite site—and more specifically, Meshel’s association of it with King Jehoash’s reign—could this be a representation of the very king? The identification would make sense based on the tight dating window and geopolitical situation.

The 32-centimeter-high plaster painting shows a royal figure depicted in typical kingly style, seated on a throne and holding a lotus flower. This is a royal motif of Egyptian origin, commonly found in Near Eastern artwork. A parallel example of a Levantine king symbolically holding a lotus flower was unearthed in Amman in 2010—in this case, a monumental statue of an Ammonite king dating to the eighth century B.C.E. Another example is a depiction of a seated Phoenician king portrayed on the Ahiram



Painted plaster artwork found at Kuntillet Ajrud

Sarcophagus (10th century B.C.E.). There are other examples cited by Beck.

For more on Jehoash and his potential depiction at Kuntilet Ajrud, read “Is This the Biblical King Jehoash?” (*ArmstrongInstitute.org/259*).

Ahab?

Abel Beth Maacah is an ancient site located in Israel’s far north, adjacent the border of Lebanon. This site likewise sat on ancient Israel’s far northern border. The geographic location has prompted long debate as to when and whether this site came under Israelite control, versus Phoenician or perhaps Syrian control. As early as the reign of David, the biblical account mentions “Abel of Beth-maacah” as a “city ... in Israel” (2 Samuel 20:15, 19).

One particular discovery at the site made headlines in 2020: a vessel dating to the 10th to ninth centuries B.C.E., bearing the inscription “Belonging to Benayau.” Not only was this an Israelite name, with a theophoric element referring to the God of Israel, it also was spelled in a manner particular to the northern kingdom of Israel (different from that of the southern kingdom of Judah). Other discoveries have since been found at the site, pointing to early Israelite occupation.

One especially notable discovery in 2017 was that of a miniature faience figurine head of a royal individual. The head has a full beard, long hair and some sort of crown/band around his head. It is the first figurine of such exquisite detail and craftsmanship to have ever been discovered in Israel. If it does indeed represent a king, the question is, which one?

King Ahab is a contender. This (actual) son of Omri was one of the northern kingdom’s most prominent kings, mentioned on another of Assyrian King Shalmaneser III’s inscriptions (the Kurkh Monolith). Ahab’s tumultuous 22-year reign spanned the early-mid ninth century (circa 873–852 B.C.E.).

An alternative Israelite king proposed is Jehu (circa 842–815 B.C.E.) or any of the minor kings in between. Other options, given the potential fluctuation of control of this northern border site, include Phoenician or Syrian (Aramean) rulers. In the words of Abel Beth Maacah codirector Nava Panitz-Cohen: “[I]f we surmise that the head depicts a dignitary, elite person or perhaps even royalty, we look at who were the historical figures at that time,” she said in an interview with *Bible History Daily*. “Candidates include Ahab and Jehu from the Israelite side, Hadadezer and Hazael from the Aramean side, and Ithobaal from the Phoenicians”—the latter, father of Ahab’s famous wife Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31). Either that, or it may just be a purely generic votive

representation of an elite figure—an interpretation favored by codirector Naama Yahalom-Mack.

Bottom line is, we don’t know. Nevertheless, given the general time frame in question, it is interesting to speculate on which (if any) of the known ninth-century B.C.E. rulers this figurine may represent.

For more on this discovery, read “First Sculptured Head of Biblical-Period King Found in Israel” (*ArmstrongInstitute.org/100*).

Hezekiah

Finally in our list, we come to Hezekiah—and an artifact that served as the feature of our previous magazine, as well as No. 1 in our list of top 10 discoveries for 2025 (see article, page 19).

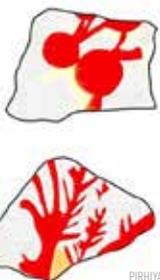
In short, Slab 28 of Sennacherib’s Nineveh palace contains a depiction of a particular and peculiar city, with a lone royal raising a banner atop the city walls. Based on the story flow of the reliefs in Sennacherib’s palace, paired with the account of his invasion into the Levant contained in his inscriptions, this city and its ruler had already been tentatively identified as



Figurine of royalty found at Abel Beth Maacah



Closeup of the royal figure on Slab 28



PIRHIYA BECK

Jerusalem and Hezekiah by Christoph Uehlinger in 2003. In 2025, Stephen Compton presented remarkable new research—from a new angle entirely—all but proving this city is indeed a representation of Jerusalem.

Logically, therefore, the royal figure contained within the city must be none other than King Hezekiah. The image of this lone figure atop a raised portion of the city, bearing a royal standard, is the veritable incarnation of Isaiah 30:17, prophesying at this time of an Assyrian onslaught until “ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, And as an ensign on a hill.” That and a visual representation of Sennacherib’s own braggadocious inscriptions, referring to “Hezekiah ... shut up in Jerusalem like a caged bird.” In like manner, Slab 28 “appears to depict Hezekiah trapped inside Jerusalem” (Compton, “Sennacherib’s Throne-Room Reliefs: On Jerusalem and the Misplaced City of Ushu”).

Unfortunately, there is not much that can be gleaned from the depiction of the king himself—Hezekiah is portrayed at this scale in a rather generic Assyrian manner. Nevertheless, thanks to early work from the likes of Uehlinger and now the recent work of Compton, Hezekiah rightly takes his place on our list of illustrations of kings of Israel and Judah.

For more on this discovery, read “Revealed: A 2,700-Year-Old Depiction of Jerusalem and Hezekiah?” (ArmstrongInstitute.org/1382).

Among Many

It bears emphasizing here that these images and illustrations we have briefly summarized in this article only pertain to the rulers of Israel and Judah. Many more biblical kings and officials from different nations and polities can be seen depicted on numerous other inscriptions, reliefs and stelae.

Included among these are pharaohs such as Shishak/Sheshonq I, So/Osorkon IV, Tirhakah/Taharqa, Necho/Neco II, Hophra/Apries; kings such as Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Merodach-baladan II, Nebuchadnezzar II, Cyrus the Great, Darius I, Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I and Darius II; and other figures besides. And these are just the more certain figures—not including numerous other more debated figures linked to the biblical account.

Thanks to more than a century and a half of biblical archaeology, these famous figures of the Bible can indeed not only be *read* about but *seen*. ■

Judah’s ‘Storehouses’: Post-Invasion Prosperity Revealed

What did Hezekiah’s kingdom look like after Assyria’s devastating conquest of Judah? The Bible reveals; archaeology corroborates.

BY MICAH VAN HALTEREN

SENNACHERIB’S INVASION OF JUDAH NEAR THE END of the eighth century B.C.E. was one of the most violent intervals in the history of the southern kingdom of Judah. The Assyrian army marched through the nation and ravaged 46 of its fortified cities and took more than 200,000 people captive, per Sennacherib’s own annals. By the time the invasion was over, Judah was laid waste.

There is abundant evidence supporting Sennacherib’s campaign. Archaeologically, it is arguably the most well-attested biblical event. Excavations have uncovered the destruction of specific cities; burn layers, arrowheads, Assyrian annals and inscriptions—the evidence is all there. We’ve also been able to learn a lot from what has not been found, such as the lack of a destruction layer in Jerusalem at this time. This provides verifiable evidence that Sennacherib did not conquer Jerusalem, just as the Bible describes.

But what about Judah *after* the Assyrian invasion?

The Bible describes that Hezekiah, free from the threat of Assyria, experienced peace and prosperity for the remainder of his reign: “And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour; and he provided him treasures for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of goodly vessels; store-houses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and flocks in folds. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much substance” (2 Chronicles 32:27-29).

Notice that this description of prosperity within Judah specifically highlights the “treasuries” and “storehouses” that flourished under Hezekiah. While



Ramat Rahel archaeological garden showing Israelite column capitals

archaeological excavation doesn't unearth an abundance of perishable items—such as grain, wine or oil—it *does* often reveal storage vessels and the buildings that contained them.

Two large administrative centers in particular have been unearthed south of Jerusalem—one at Ramat Rahel and one in the Arnona neighborhood—giving us evidence of this post-invasion prosperity.

Ramat Rahel

Let's start with the one that was discovered first. Ramat Rahel was an ancient settlement on the mountain ridge between Jerusalem and Bethlehem—a strategic position above the two main roads that led to the capital city from the south and west. The settlement's position lent itself to commanding the Rephaim Valley, a rich agricultural area.

The archaeological park at the site consists of a palatial structure, a courtyard encircled by a casemate wall, a watchtower and a later period royal garden. It has been excavated on and off since 1930. The first archaeologist to excavate Ramat Rahel was Prof. Benjamin Mazar, a man with whom we had a long and special history (see article, page 2).

Its biblical identification isn't certain. Various scholars have produced several options. The most agreed upon identification was given by Prof. Yohanan Aharoni, who excavated the site in the 1950s and '60s: He proposed it as the biblical site of Beth-cherem (Jeremiah 6:1), which means "house of vineyards." This is a fitting name since Ramat Rahel lies in the middle of a rich agricultural area.

The first phase of the palace was constructed during the reign of Hezekiah in the late eighth to early seventh

century B.C.E. Some of the most important discoveries of this earliest stage were a large number of stamps, proto-Aeolic capitals, balustrades, crenellations, casemate walls and an impressive ashlar stone assembly. All these features are typical of Judean construction.

Ramat Rahel's role as an administrative center is demonstrated by the more than 600 stamp impressions discovered at the site. The most common type of stamps from phase one are the well-known *lmlk* seals, meaning "to the king." These stamps are associated with the reign of Hezekiah and demonstrate the administrative power of his kingdom. Their presence at the site further proves its function as an administrative center during his reign.

According to Ramat Rahel excavation director Prof. Oded Lipschits, the stamps served two purposes: "This system, which appears to have been primarily administered from the Judahite center of Ramat Rahel south of Jerusalem, was used to collect, store and transport the agricultural products—mainly *wine and olive oil*—supplied across an expansive network of royal estates, to support Judah's economy ..." ("Enduring Impressions," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 2022; emphasis added throughout).

Notice that it was used to administer the storage of agricultural products, just like Hezekiah's "storehouses" described in 2 Chronicles 32. The majority of the *lmlk* stamps found at Ramat Rahel (and Jerusalem) were of the late type—the production of which started *after* Sennacherib's conquest. This means this Ramat Rahel "storehouse" became most prominent in the second half of Hezekiah's reign, providing evidence of the post-invasion prosperity described in the Bible.

Assyrian or Judean?

It is hard to precisely date the building's construction, and archaeologists debate whether the palace was initially constructed by the Assyrians or the Judeans under King Hezekiah.

The most recent excavators believe construction was initiated by the Assyrians to serve as the seat of their local governor and to collect tribute for the empire. This is in line with a commonly assumed paradigm in scholarship, that Sennacherib maintained a strong presence in Judah—in spite of the biblical account of his defeat in Jerusalem—with the spared city going on to become tributary to the empire, with local governors installed in its regional centers whose fealty was to Assyria.

This is summarized in *Bible History Daily's* article "Sennacherib's Administration in Jerusalem": "Although Sennacherib's invasion of Judah—mentioned in numerous biblical books and contemporary Assyrian sources—did not succeed in conquering Jerusalem itself, the Assyrians did conquer much of Judah's territory. This led directly to King Hezekiah pledging fealty to the Assyrians and paying them tribute as a vassal kingdom."

This, of course, is not the way the Bible describes it. Nevertheless, Ramat Rahel's more recent excavators, in following this logic, believe the fact that its palace was built out of sight of Jerusalem carries "much weight in any discussion of who originally built the site and why." By intentionally building the palace out of sight of Judah's capital, Assyria's power was "clearly demonstrated and expressed, but wisely does not overshadow the capital, the religious center, and thus the honor of the local regime" ("Ramat Rahel IV—The Renewed Excavations by the Tel Aviv–Heidelberg Expedition [2005–2010]," Lipschits, et al. 2020). Others also point to Assyrian wares discovered at the site as evidence of its Assyrian origin.

But if the palace was constructed by the Assyrians, then why does it bear so many royal *Judean* features like the volute capitals and balustrades—and why is it replete with so many Judean administrative stamps?

Archaeologist Dr. Raz Kletter from the University of Helsinki, using the volute capitals as evidence, believes the Assyrians were not involved at all in the construction. Contrary to Lipschits, who argued that the Assyrians "encouraged, approved or sponsored" the use of such capitals, Kletter says that there is no evidence for this. Pointing to known Assyrian constructions, he wrote: "If the Assyrians adored volute capitals and 'encouraged, approved or sponsored' their use at Ammon, Moab and Judah, how can it be that at the same time and in the same area, the use of stone volute capitals was avoided in all those Assyrian/Assyrianized

buildings?" ("Yavneh II: The 'Temple Hill' Repository Pit," Kletter, et al., 2015).

To Kletter, the "only possible conclusion is that volute capitals have nothing to do with Assyria."

Another in Arnona

In 2020, a palace from the same era was uncovered in even closer proximity to Jerusalem. On Aug. 3, 2020, *Biblical Archaeology Society* published an article about the discovery of "a major 2,700-year-old governmental administrative center in the Arnona neighborhood of Jerusalem" ("Arnona: Administrative Center Found From Time of Jerusalem Kings"). Excavations led by the Israel Antiquities Authority revealed more than 120 seal-impressed jar handles, many of which were also inscribed with *lmlk*—mainly of the "late" type.

The first phase contained a large building akin to the Ramat Rahel palace, which most likely served the same administrative function. It was eventually and purposefully dismantled and covered by a large heap of stones for unknown reasons (perhaps as part of the Assyrian destruction of buildings surrounding Jerusalem).

According to the archaeologists, sometime after the Assyrian conquest, a thick wall was constructed on the north side, which, together with the stone heap, functioned as a platform for a building belonging to the next phase. The new construction was made of large ashlar stones, which, "together with the high concentration of late types of *lmlk* stamp impressions found in the construction fills surrounding the platform walls, suggest that a new monumental administrative structure was built in Phase 6b, most probably in the early part of the seventh century B.C.E." ("A New Assemblage of 'Private' Stamped Jar Handles from the Mordot Arnona Excavations, Jerusalem," Neria Sapir, et al., 2023). The dating of this new structure corresponds nicely to the post-invasion period and the latter part of Hezekiah's reign.

"Ramat Rachel and the administrative center recently uncovered by the Israel Antiquities Authority on the slopes of Arnona, attests to a new revival in the city and a somewhat 'exit from the walls' of the First Temple Period, after the Assyrian siege," wrote IAA archaeologist Ya'akov Billig. "We reveal villas, mansions and government buildings in the area outside the walls of the city. *This testifies to the relief felt by the city's residents and the*



recovery of Jerusalem's development after the Assyrian threat was over.”

Not only do these discoveries testify to *relief*, but also to prosperity. The preponderance of late-type *lmlk* stamps indicate that Ramat Rahel began to truly flourish as an administrative center after Sennacherib's invasion; the case is similar for the later Arnona structure.

What is perhaps most remarkable about these two sites is just how close they are to Jerusalem, the administrative heart of the nation: Ramat Rahel is located 3.5 kilometers (2 miles) from the city; the Arnona neighborhood structure is around 2.5 kilometers (1.2 miles) away.

The significance of these administrative centers being established so close to the capital was noted in a 2024 *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* article by Christopher Eames and Yosef Garfinkel, highlighting the nearly 700 Iron Age II inscriptions from Jerusalem proper, as well as the nearly 400 inscriptions from



Israel Antiquities Authority excavations at the Arnona site

Ramat Rahel and Arnona: “First Temple Period Jerusalem, the administrative capital of the kingdom of Judah, was not an isolated center, as outside its walls were subsidiary administrative support structures, which should be considered jointly when assessing the capital's significance and strength” (“A Corpus of Iron Age II Inscriptions From Jerusalem”).

Both Ramat Rahel and the Arnona complex confirm a great agricultural renaissance around Jerusalem right after the Assyrian conquest—a blessing foretold by the Prophet Isaiah: “And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year that which growth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. And the remnant that is escaped of

the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward” (Isaiah 37:30-31).

Consolidating Power

Having examined the archaeological evidence of these storehouses, let's complete the picture of Hezekiah's post-invasion kingdom.

We do know that Judah lost some territory to the Assyrian Empire. Sennacherib records in his annals: “I detached from his [Hezekiah's] land the cities of his that I had plundered and I gave them to the kings of the [Philistine] cities Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gaza, and thereby made his land smaller.”

Cities like Lachish, Azekah, Timnah and Socoh were destroyed; the Philistine cities Hezekiah had captured were taken from him. “Hezekiah's kingdom was reduced and many of the sites that were destroyed were either not resettled, or were only partially resettled, or were resettled for a very brief period,” archaeologist Oded Borowski wrote in “Sennacherib in Judah—the Devastating Consequences of an Assyrian Campaign.”

The exact extent of the nation at this time is hard to determine. We know sites like Gibeon and Mizpah in the north were not destroyed, and Sennacherib's war path indicates that most of the lost territory was in the west. Excavations at the eastern side of Beth Shemesh show evidence of some new construction right after the city was devastated, suggesting it was close to the new western limit of Hezekiah's kingdom.

The decrease in Judahite-controlled land close to the Philistine Coastal Plain could explain why these storehouses were either built or flourishing close to the capital Jerusalem after the Assyrian devastation. “During this period the Shephelah [Judean lowland] was already cut off from Judah, increasing the importance of the agricultural areas around Jerusalem. As such, it is likely that the royal estates around Jerusalem became more important and continued to develop in this period,” wrote Ramat Rahel's excavators (Sapir, et al., 2022).

Even though the nation became smaller, it was still able to thrive. Evidence, such as from Ramat Rahel and Arnona, shows that Hezekiah likely consolidated the administrative power of the nation closer to Jerusalem. Once again, the picture we get corresponds to these “storehouses” flourishing in the latter half of Hezekiah's rule and onward.

At this time, the smaller but independent southern kingdom of Judah stored the “great abundance” of its post-invasion kingdom at Ramat Rahel and Arnona—examples of the great storehouses of Judah, and a further illustration that even with the remnant that remained, Judah was able to “take root downward and bear fruit upward.” ■

The day after sending that letter, Mr. Armstrong boarded a plane to Jerusalem.

There is a great lesson in this: When you have the Jerusalem vision, even heavy trials will not stop you.

Mr. Armstrong's legacy shows that something special was happening in his life and in the work he led. Some of the most outstanding universities in America were trying to be a part of those excavations—the most important dig on Earth. Yet a small college in Pasadena, California, was the one that received that honor!

In 1986, Ambassador College students appeared on the cover of *Biblical Archaeology Review*—impressive prestige and publicity for any college.

The Enduring Vision

Inspired by the same vision Mr. Armstrong had, we have continued his legacy and humanitarian work in Jerusalem with the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology. We worked to restore Liberty Bell Park. Shortly after Dr. Eilat Mazar discovered King David's palace in the City of David, we started an archaeological partnership with her. We sent our first students to assist in her excavations in 2006.

That same year, we met Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski and reconvened with longtime friends of Mr. Armstrong's, such as Prof. Joseph Aviram. We've also built relationships with other Israeli officials and ambassadors.

Since 2006, our students have been heavily involved in several digs that have unearthed marvelous, biblically significant artifacts, including Nehemiah's Wall; the bullae of Jehucal, Gedaliah, King Hezekiah and Isaiah; and Solomon's Wall.

On March 30, the *New York Times* published an article titled "Can an Archaeological Dig Change the Future of Jerusalem?" It quoted former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro as saying, "It's hard to overstate how moving it is for Jews to connect to David's Jerusalem." Just as Mr. Armstrong did, we aim to connect the people of Israel to David's Jerusalem.

The Jewish people have amazing history and heritage that is being unearthed from the soil under their feet—artifacts that connect to prophecies in their Bibles!

There is wonderful vision wrapped up in Isaiah 40. Watch Jerusalem. You need the vision of what is about to happen in that city! In a short while, Jerusalem is going to be the capital of the world. It will be called a city of truth. Peace, joy and happiness will be abundant (Zechariah 8:3-6). People from around the world will flow to Jerusalem to be taught God's law and to learn the way of peace (Isaiah 2:1-5). God's education and truth will fill the Earth! (Habakkuk 2:14).

This was the vision that fueled Mr. Armstrong's love for Jerusalem—and this vision motivates our work today. ■

In Memoriam:

Prof. Gabriel Barkay, Dean of Biblical Archaeology

(1944–2026)

Israel loses another archaeology
giant. BY ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE STAFF

ON JANUARY 11, ISRAEL LOST ANOTHER ARCHAEOLOGY giant: Prof. Gabriel "Gaby" Barkay died at 81 years old (1944–2026).

Barkay was professor emeritus of Bar-Ilan University and Hebrew University. He was the recipient of a range of awards, including the Jerusalem Prize (1996), Moskowitz Prize for Zionism (2014) and Yakir Yerushalayim award (2018).

Professor Barkay, sometimes referred to affectionately as the "dean of biblical archaeology," is known for his copious archaeological and epigraphical contributions to the world of biblical archaeology. He is best known for his work concerning Jerusalem, where he has to his name one of the greatest discoveries in biblical archaeology: the Ketef Hinnom Scrolls. Otherwise known as the Priestly Blessing Scrolls, these documents constitute the earliest biblical text ever discovered (dating to circa 600 B.C.E.), predating a bulk of the Dead Sea Scrolls by half a millennium. They were found during his 1979 excavations along the edge of the Valley of Hinnom.

Also notable is his role as cofounder and codirector of the Temple Mount Sifting Project (TMSP), alongside Zachi Dvira. This initiative has been ongoing since 2004. It is unique in the world of archaeology, as workers sift and salvage precious finds from within the thousands of tons of earth illegally bulldozed by the Islamic Waqf from the Temple Mount and dumped outside.

The TMSP wrote in "The Passing of Dr. Gabriel

YOUNG EARTH OR OLD? Gap Creation Explained

Which view does the Bible communicate—and the evidence reveal? BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES



OF ALL THE REMARKABLE DISCOVERIES IN THE world of biblical archaeology—the Tel Dan Stele, King Hezekiah’s seal impression, the Siloam Tunnel and Lachish Reliefs—the above picture is one of my favorites. Most people probably wouldn’t consider it relevant to “biblical archaeology.” It seems more

relevant to the fields of paleontology or geology. But I believe it has a direct connection to the biblical account—although just *how* is a matter of significant controversy.

On the face of it, this dark band of material sandwiched between two layers of rock doesn’t seem that impressive. What is it exactly? Scientifically, this is known as the Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg) Boundary. It is prominently exposed and visible at various sites around the planet. This layer contains high quantities of iridium ($_{77}\text{Ir}$)—one of the rarest elements in Earth’s crust, but abundant in *meteorites*, and found in high percentages around impact craters.

In simple terms, the K-Pg Boundary is the visual dividing line between man and the dinosaurs. It is the

destruction layer separating the Age of Reptiles from the Age of Mammals—the Mesozoic Era from the era in which we find ourselves today, the Cenozoic (“New Life”).

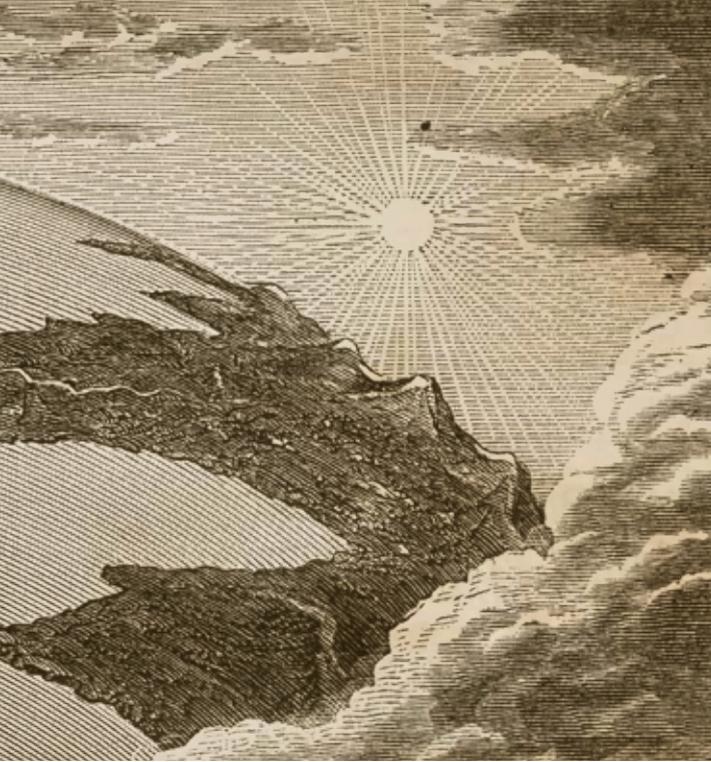
I am what you might refer to as an “old-Earth creationist.” For many believers, that term comes with some baggage—conjuring up varying ideas of evolution; manipulation of internal biblical data to fit external, nonbiblical data; or pass-

ing off the early passages of Genesis as merely symbolic. Certainly, there are old-Earth creationists who do hold to theistic evolutionary models. I am not one. Nor am I a proponent of the “day-age” theory, that reinterprets the “days of creation” as each representing nondescript, immense lengths of time; nor do I consider the early passages of Genesis to represent mere symbolism.

Instead, I am a proponent of “gap creation,” also referred to as the “gap theory,” “ruin-restoration theory” or “gap creationism.”

What is gap creation exactly? Put simply, this considers “creation week” recorded in Genesis 1 as a *re-creation*. Gap creation refers to the *re-creation* of a world already brought to existence at some nondescript time in deep antiquity (per Genesis 1:1); one that sometime later fell to ruin (per Genesis 1:2) and was eventually restored (per Genesis 1:3 onward).

Many readers will likely be somewhat familiar with gap creation, due to the significant growth in popularity it enjoyed throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible and



promulgated by many high-profile theologians and educators (among them our own namesake, Herbert W. Armstrong).

Yet starting in the second half of the 20th century, there has been a growing pushback against gap creation. One of the catalysts for this was the 1961 publication of *The Genesis Flood*, by young-Earth creationists John Whitcomb and Henry Morris. This work is considered to be “largely responsible for the revival of Flood geology and young-Earth creationism” (Tom McIver, “Formless and Void: Gap Theory Creationism”).

Criticism even comes from other old-Earth creationists, including one of the most prominent modern Christian philosophers, Dr. William Lane Craig—an old-Earth theistic evolutionist who caricatures “the classic gap theory” as portraying “a kind of botched creation between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 This is a desperate attempt to explain away the fossil evidence for the antiquity of the world” (“Is Genesis Gap Theory Correct?”). Critiques of gap creation commonly allege that the view is held only because of *external*, modern science-driven conclusions, in spite of an otherwise-clear reading of the biblical text.

This is decidedly not the case. As we shall see, the *biblical text* alone leads one to conclude an old Earth, gap creation. While proponents naturally point to scientific discoveries in substantiation (who wouldn’t consider external evidence that supports the biblical text?), the fact of the matter is that the gap theory emerged long *before* the more modern scientific conclusions about Earth’s prehistory.

This article presents an overview of gap creation and addresses some of the more common objections.

Genesis 1:1: ‘In a Beginning’

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

So begins the first verse—and surely one of the most beautifully simple—of the Bible. Creation is recorded here without any timestamp or qualification as occurring at some time in deep antiquity and obviously prior to the proceeding creation week verses that follow.

Actually, the very first word—בראשית (typically translated as “in the beginning”)—contains something very interesting: There is *no* definite article, “the.” It reads, “In A beginning”—further implying a disconnected, indefinite point in time, deep within the past. “It might have been millions—or even billions—of years [ago],” wrote Herbert W. Armstrong (*Mystery of the Ages*)—we are simply not told, nor is it important for us to know at this juncture.

Genesis 1:2a: ‘Tohu and Bohu’

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” This verse is the key passage for gap creationists. The words “without form and void” are *tohu* and *bohu* in Hebrew (תהו ובהו)—a phrase translated variously as “waste and empty” (American Standard Version), “desolation and emptiness” (Smith’s Literal Translation), “chaos and empty” (Peshitta).

The joint use of these terms is found in two other places. One is Isaiah 34:11, in a passage describing God’s vengeance against the nations: “... For God will measure that land carefully; he will measure it for *chaos [tohu]* and *destruction [bohu]*” (New Living Translation). The other passage is found in Jeremiah 4, comparing Jerusalem’s prophesied destruction to Genesis 1:2: “... Behold—publish concerning Jerusalem ... I beheld the earth, And, lo, it was *waste [tohu]* and *void [bohu]* ...” (verses 16, 23). These *wartime* passages reflect a picture of *destruction* and *ruin* coming upon a former state of peace and population. If we infer the same for Genesis 1:2, then *tohu* and *bohu* are inflicted upon the initial state of creation described in Genesis 1:1.

By contrast, the standard young-Earth explanation of Genesis 1:2 is that it represents the as-yet unformed state of earth, as created by God. This view implies God created Earth in a state of *tohu*. Yet this belief clearly contradicts Isaiah 45:18, which says, “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, He is God; That formed the earth and made it, He established it, *He created it NOT a waste [tohu]*, other translations, “in vain” ...” (Isaiah 45:18). Here we have the explicit statement that God created the Earth “NOT *tohu*.”

Some young-Earth proponents argue that Isaiah 45:18 should be translated “not TO BE *tohu*,” in order to reconcile the passage with Genesis 1:2. Yet there is no “to be” in the Hebrew of Isaiah 45:18. Simply, לֹא תהו בראה (using the

same verb for “create” found in Genesis 1:1)—*He created it NOT tohu*. Young-Earth proponent Weston Fields wrestled with this question in his book *Unformed and Unfulfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (1976), submitting instead that it “cannot be assumed *a priori* that *tohu* as used in Genesis 1:2 has the same meaning when used in Isaiah 45:18.”

The young-Earth view holds God to have created the *tohu* of Genesis 1:2. Yet Isaiah 45:18 says plainly that God “created not *tohu*.” And passages like Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23 describe such a state in the context of *war*.

“The original Hebrew words which Moses wrote, translated ‘waste and empty,’ are ‘tohu’ and ‘bohu,’ otherwise translated ‘chaotic and in confusion,’” wrote Mr. Armstrong in a March 1968 *Plain Truth* personal. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the Earth. It was PERFECT. The angels shouted for joy (Job 38:1-7). God is not the author of confusion” Yet in Genesis 1:2, we have a confused and chaotic, *tohu* Earth.

What happened?

‘Fallen From Heaven’

The explanation for this is theological. What is described in Genesis 1:2 is recognized by gap creationists as representative of a “fall,” not of man, but of *angels*, in an event sometimes called the “angelic rebellion.” This rebellion, which caused Earth to fall into a state of *tohu* and *bohu*, is recorded in both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament.

Isaiah 14:12-15 say, “HOW ART THOU FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O LUCIFER, son of the morning! ... [T]hou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell ...” (King James Version).

Ezekiel 28:14-16 say, “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, TILL INIQUITY WAS FOUND IN THEE. ... [T]HOU HAST SINNED: THEREFORE I WILL CAST THEE AS PROFANE OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD: AND I WILL DESTROY THEE, O COVERING CHERUB ...” (KJV).

Luke 10:18 says, “... I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” The Apostle Peter wrote, “... God

spared not the angels that sinned, BUT CAST THEM DOWN TO HELL, AND DELIVERED THEM INTO CHAINS OF DARKNESS, to be reserved unto judgment ...” (2 Peter 2:4). Jude 6 says, “AND THE ANGELS WHICH KEPT NOT THEIR FIRST ESTATE, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment.” The book of Revelation also describes an angelic rebellion against God: “[T]here appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth ...” (Revelation 12:3-4).

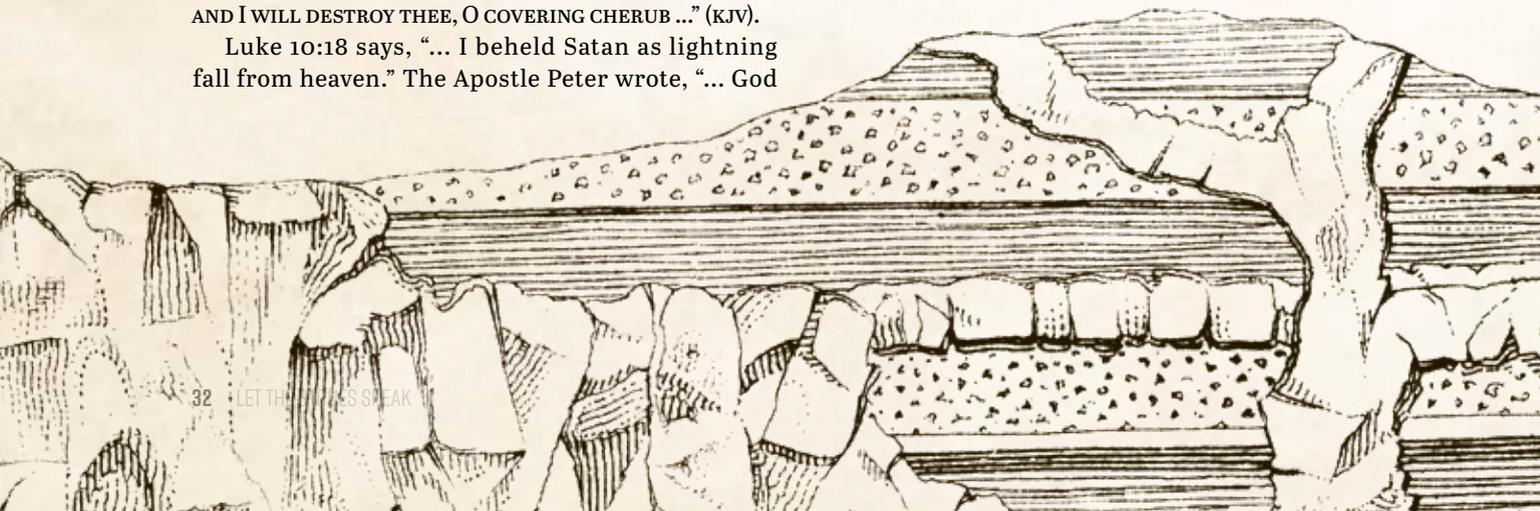
Among many young-Earth proponents, there is significant disagreement as to where exactly to put the angelic fall—such as at some arbitrary point within the six days of creation or shortly after, prior to the Genesis 3 incident. For gap creationists, Genesis 1:2 provides the resounding answer: The angelic rebellion was the *cause* of the wartime state of *tohu* and *bohu* inflicted upon prehistoric Earth. Fascinating early texts articulating this event in detail include the seventh-century C.E. Hymn of Cædmon (see sidebar, page 33)

Remember the K-Pg Boundary? This represents the most conspicuous visual evidence of a great earth-wide extinction event that destroyed most life forms (animals and plants). It is visual evidence of the catastrophic episode that can incontrovertibly be described as “*tohu* and *bohu*” (see sidebar, page 35).

Then follow the six days of creation, or in gap creation parlance, *re-creation*.

Genesis 1:2b: ‘Renewal’

“And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” From here—the latter part of verse 2 onward—we move into the ensuing six-day creation account. And notice what we *already have* from verses 1-2. We already have “heavens”—a plural Hebrew word referring not only to outer space but also Earth’s atmosphere. We already have “earth,” *land*. We already have “waters.” And note that all of this is *before* the “first day”—all before the “spirit of God moved” to initiate work.



There is a fascinating parallel passage to Genesis 1:2b. Psalm 104 extrapolates on this creation account, yet contains peculiar details that have led some young-Earth creationists to dismiss it as solely poetical. But there is reason to its rhyme. Note in particular verses 29-30: “Thou hidest Thy face, they [the creatures of the Earth] vanish; Thou withdrawest their breath, they perish, And return to their dust. *Thou sendest forth Thy spirit*, they are created; *And Thou RENEWEST the FACE of the earth.*”

This inspired psalm clearly speaks of *sending forth of spirit* and a *RENEWAL*. Of what? Of the *face*, or surface, of the Earth. This word for “renewal” is rare, found in only nine other verses—all of which describe the “repairing” or “renewing” of preexisting things (e.g. the altar, temple, etc).

“From verse 2 of Genesis 1 on, the remainder of this first chapter of the Bible is not describing the original creation of the Earth,” wrote Mr. Armstrong in *Mystery of the Ages*. “BUT IT IS DESCRIBING A RENEWING OF THE FACE OF THE EARTH, AFTER IT HAD BECOME WASTE AND EMPTY The verses that follow in this first chapter of the Bible describe the renewing of the face of the Earth, yielding beautiful lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, vegetation—then the creation of fish and fowl, animal life, and finally man” (emphasis added).

This renewal process, then, brings us to our “first day.”

Genesis 1:3-5: ‘One Day’

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the *FIRST DAY*.”

Actually, “first day” is *not* the Hebrew term used here (though this is a common translation). The Hebrew term for “first day” *does* exist and is used ubiquitously in the Bible. But we have here something different—simply, “one day”—thus “evening and morning *one day*” (Douay-Rheims). Other passages demonstrating this notably more generic Hebrew terminology include Genesis 33:13 (“*one day*, all the flocks will die”); 1 Samuel 27:1 (“I shall perish *one day*”); Zechariah 14:7 (“there shall be *one day*”).

The first-century C.E. Jewish philosopher Philo noted, “He called it not ‘the first day,’ but ‘one day,’” presenting

Cædmon’s Hymn

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF THE HYMN OF Cædmon in a section known as “Genesis A.” Though attributed to the seventh-century Cædmon (per the Venerable Bede), the earliest manuscript evidence dates to the 10th century. Debate of origin aside, it still constitutes the earliest datable example of Old English verse (challenging *Beowulf*, whose composition date is more speculative). The following is a translation of the text transmitted in *Codex Junius 11*, Liber 1:

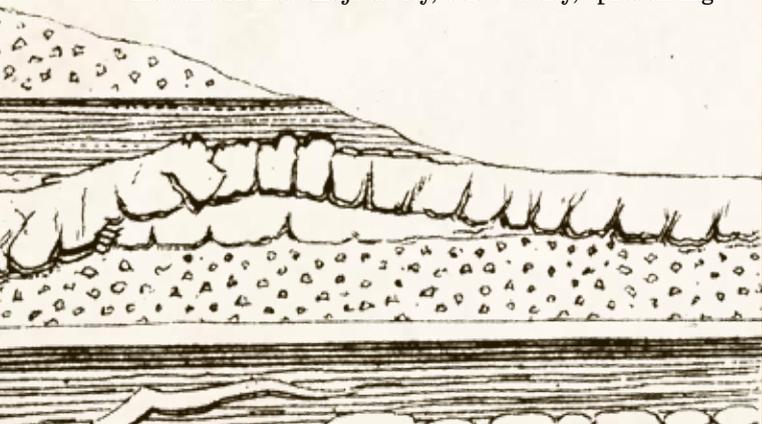
The angel legions knew the blessedness of God, celestial joy and bliss. Great was their glory! ... They knew no sin nor any evil; but dwelt in peace for ever with their Lord. They wrought no deed in heaven save right and truth, until the angel prince in pride walked in the ways of error. Then no longer would they work their own advantage, but turned away from the love of God. They boasted greatly, in their banded strength, that they could share with God His glorious dwelling, spacious and heavenly bright.

Then sorrow came upon them, envy and insolence and pride of the angel who first began that deed of folly, to plot and hatch it forth, and, thirsting for battle, boasted that in the northern borders of heaven he would establish a throne and a kingdom. Then was God angered and unathful against that host which He had crowned before with radiance and glory. ...

Fierce of heart, they boasted they would take the kingdom, and easily. But their hope failed them when the Lord, High King of heaven, lifted His hand against their host. ... He crushed His foes, subdued them to His will, and, in His wrath, drove out the rebels from their ancient home and seats of glory. ...

Then our Lord took counsel in the thoughts of His heart how He might people, with a better host, the great creation

As yet was nought save shadows of darkness; the spacious earth lay hidden, deep and dim, alien to God, unpeopled and unused. Thereon the Steadfast King looked down and beheld it, a place empty of joy. He saw dim chaos hanging in eternal night, obscure beneath the heavens, desolate and dark, until this world was fashioned by the word of the King of glory. Here first with mighty power the Everlasting Lord, the Helm of all created things, Almighty King, made earth and heaven, raised up the sky and founded the spacious land.



his own philosophical reasons as to why (*On the Creation*, 9). Later that century, Jewish historian Josephus argued that this *was* the first day, but deferred his explanation about the reason for the odd language: “[T]his was indeed the *first* day. But Moses said it was *one* day; the cause of which I am able to give even now; but ... I shall put off its exposition” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.1.1).

Yet on the basis of gap creation, this use of “one day” in verse 5 only makes perfect sense *if there had been others before it*. The use of “one day” in time then becomes the referent for the days of *re-creation* to follow (thus “second” day from the initial one, “third,” and so on).

As far as gap creation goes, this is by no means the extent of the evidence. It should be mentioned that variations also exist, such as the “soft gap theory” and “pre-creation chaos gap theory” (neither of which I find compelling). What I have described here could be described as more of a “classic gap theory.”

We now turn to address some of the common objections to gap creation.

Objection No. 1: Grammar

Genesis 1:2 is often translated in gap creation circles as, “And the earth *became* [rather than *was*] without form and void” Gap creationist and ancient languages expert Arthur Custance renders the verse: “But the earth *had become* a desolation” His 1970 book *Without Form and Void* centers primarily around the grammatical argument.

The grammar of Genesis 1:2—especially the nature of the word היתה as “was” or “became” (as well as the nature of the leading prefix ו as “and” or “but”)—has been a subject of fierce debate. Weston’s aforementioned 1976 book was penned in direct response to Custance’s arguments. Young-Earth creationist Dr. William Barrick views this grammatical argument as the chief reason for the gradual abandonment of gap creation over the past half-century: “The arguments against it [the gap theory] have been so strong ... one of the biggest reasons is Hebrew grammar. This is where Hebrew grammar really does form the argument—not vocabulary, but grammar” (interview, *Biblical Studies and Reviews*, Oct. 27, 2025).

These grammatical arguments get very technical, and in my opinion, go far beyond the evidence at hand. Despite claims to the contrary, there do still exist manifold differing interpretations of the language of

Genesis 1:1-2. Custance rightly points out that those scholars arguing against any sense of the word *became* inevitably end up “contradict[ing] themselves in certain critical ways. [Commentator Carl Friedrich] Keil refuses to recognize the possibility of ‘became’ for ‘was’ in Genesis 1:2 but suggests it for ‘was’ in Genesis 3:20 where the same word occurs in precisely the same form.” (Genesis 3:22 is another case in point—using the masculine form of the word, היה, translated as “is become.”)

Personally, I do not find this argument over grammar compelling. Even if the word “was” was the best rendering in verse 2, this in no way argues against a change or gap between verses 1 and 2. It would simply mean in verse 1 the Earth *was* one way, and then in verse 2, it *was* another.

Objection No. 2: Death Before Adam?

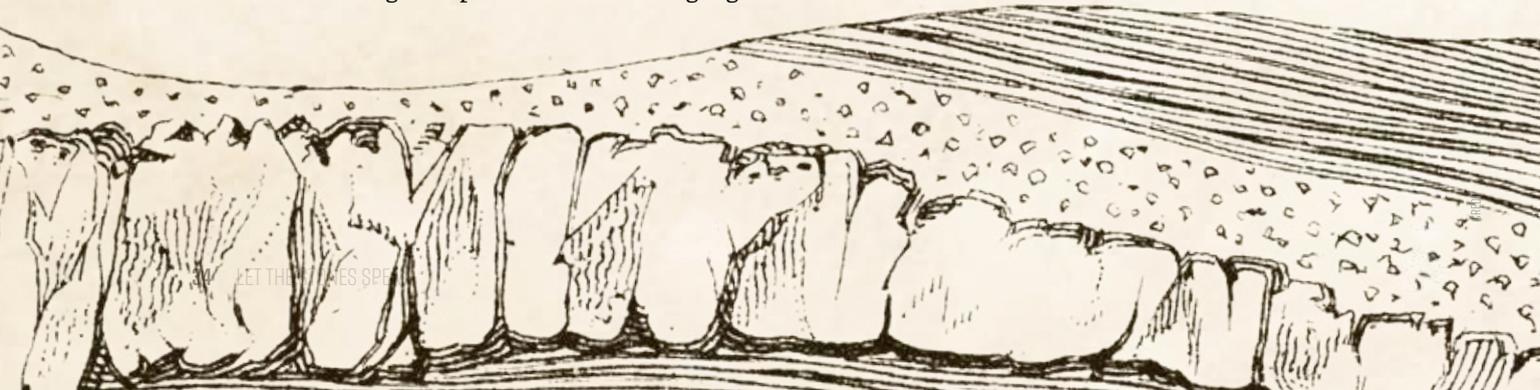
An objection that commonly surfaces within Christian circles is the notion of *animal death before Adam*. Two New Testament passages are typically appealed to. The first is Romans 5:12, which says, “[B]y one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” The other is 1 Corinthians 15:21, which says, “For since by man came death”

Thus, it is inferred that *animal* death only began with Adam and Eve (starting in Genesis 3). There is a problem with this argument, however—a reason why these New Testament passages are only ever partially quoted in this debate. Both passages are clearly referring to *human* death—and more than that, *spiritual* (eternal) death. The last half of Romans 5:12 specifies this “death passing upon ALL MEN” (e.g. verse 14). 1 Corinthians 15:23 also specifies “every man” as part of this described cycle of death followed by resurrection.

The passages *do not* suggest *animal* death only began in Genesis 3.

Objection No. 3: What About the Fourth Day?

Another objection is that Genesis 1:14-19—the fourth day of re-creation—seem to imply the creation of the sun, moon and stars. How does this fit into the gap creation model, which puts the creation of these entities much earlier?



“And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth’ ...” (verses 14-15). The Ambassador College publication *‘In the Beginning ...’ Answers to Questions From Genesis* explained this passage: “[G]reat destruction had occurred to the Earth as pictured in Genesis 1:2. [The] atmosphere [was] filled with thick clouds. If there had been a human being on the Earth’s surface, he would have seen nothing—because no light penetrated the saturated atmosphere. [O]n the fourth day of creation, God cleared the clouds away so that the sun, moon and stars could be clearly viewed. Verse 16 tells us that God ‘made’ the sun and moon. ... It could be translated as ‘made,’ ‘had made’

“Note what one well-known Old Testament introduction says on the subject: ‘In explaining this phenomenon, it must first be noted that the standpoint of the first chapter of Genesis is an ideal geocentric one, as though the writer were actually upon the Earth at that time and in a position to record the developing phases of created life From such a standpoint the heavenly bodies would only become visible when the dense cloud-covering of the Earth had dispersed to a large extent’ (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, page 554).”

Actually, questions surrounding the fourth day of creation are not so common in relation to gap creation. Instead, they represent far greater difficulty for the young-Earth position, in something known as the “light before luminaries” problem. Verses 3-13 already describe the presence of *light*, the passing of *evening* and *morning*, *day* and *night*—all of which we know to be the product of the sun and of Earth’s rotation around it.

This problem was one of the biggest reasons for early theologians to posit entirely different theories of creation—not pressure from “modern science” or the “geologic column.” The third-century C.E. Origen recorded the following mockery from the second-century C.E. Greek philosopher Celsus: “By far the most

silly thing is the distribution of the creation of the world over certain days, before days existed: for, as the heaven was not yet created, nor the foundation of the Earth yet laid, nor the sun yet revolving [prior to the discovery of heliocentrism], how could there be days?” (*Contra Celsum*, 6.60).

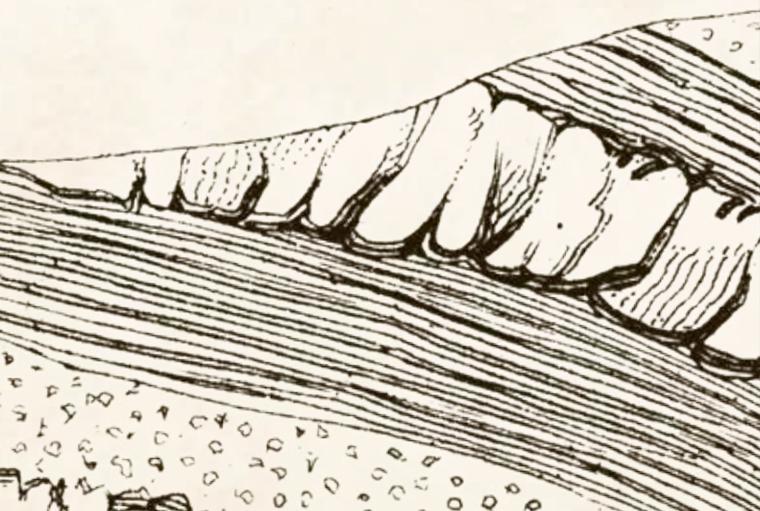
Far from the account of the fourth day representing a problem passage for gap creation, I would submit that *only* this explanation sufficiently answers the “light before luminaries” conundrum—with the preexistence of the heavens and Earth, including prior “days” (something already implied in the language of Genesis 1:5, “one day”).

Chicxulub

GROUND ZERO FOR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE K-Pg extinction event is the Chicxulub crater, located just off the shore of Mexico’s Yucatán Peninsula. First discovered in the 1970s and named after the nearby coastal town of Chicxulub (Pueblo)—a rather appropriate ancient Mayan name variously translated as “devil’s flea,” “devil’s tail” or even “place where the devil fell”—the crater spans up to 200 kilometers (120 miles) wide and 30 kilometers (19 miles) deep.

Modeling of the impact estimates it to have been the product of an asteroid approximately 10 kilometers in diameter (six miles—from sea level, taller than Mount Everest), approaching at a speed of Mach 58 (20 kilometers/12 miles per second), and delivering an impact estimated at over 900 *billion* times that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

The results would have been unimaginable—causing mega-tsunamis, firestorms and a “nuclear winter” around the globe, consisting of a thick “soot cloud” entirely blocking sunlight, with debris even escaping Earth’s orbit—ending a majority of all life forms on the planet. ■



Objection No. 4:

Exodus 20:11

Another objection is an appeal to Exodus 20:11—a description of creation contained within the Sabbath commandment. “[F]or in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day” Doesn’t this imply *all* were created within the single six-day period?

There is something curious about this verse. It does, of course, connect to the Genesis 1 account. It includes the description of both Earth- and heaven-associated activity—the latter of which is clearly associated with days one and four, and for that matter can refer exclusively to Earth’s atmosphere (e.g. Genesis 27:28). Yet more interestingly, the verb used in Exodus 20:11 is *not* the same as in Genesis 1:1—*bara*, בָּרָא—meaning to “create.” A different verb is used—*asah*, עָשָׂה. While it *can* be used in the sense of creating, this is not necessarily the case—it is a more generic word implying *doing, working, completing*. If Exodus 20:11 was keying into Genesis 1:1, then its omission of the very verb used in this passage to specify *creation* would be odd indeed.

Custance addresses this objection in detail in Appendix xx of *Without Form and Void*, concluding: “Exodus 20:11 surely refers to the work of these six days not as a time of creation *ex nihilo* but as a time in which a ruined cosmos was re-ordered as a fit habitation for man.”

Objection No. 5:

Bending Scripture to Science?

This final, most oft-repeated objection goes something like this: *The gap theory was only invented in modern times as a way to bend Scripture to science, to fit with emerging theories about the antiquity of Earth.*

Old-Earth creationist Dr. Gavin Ortlund aptly summarized the flaws inherent in this objection, noting that “it’s kind of lazy to just dismiss all science. Nobody can really do that ... there are times when science does correct an interpretation of Scripture.” He highlighted Nicolaus Copernicus’s discovery of heliocentrism (the Earth’s rotation around the sun), which received scathing condemnation from 16th-century religious authorities. “They had the exact same appeal—don’t take man’s science over God’s Word” (“Response to Ken Ham: Animal Death, Historicity and Science”).

Custance, for his part, carefully couches the issue: “[T]he question of whether Genesis 1 can be squared with modern geological theory is of *secondary* importance. I do not for one moment say it is quite unimportant. It is important. But the more important thing is, undoubtedly, to determine what Genesis says.”

But what about it? *Is the gap theory really such a modern idea?*

Truth is, the gap theory existed long before modern discoveries of Earth’s antiquity.

As David F. Payne wrote, “The ‘gap’ theory itself, as a matter of exegesis, *antedated* the scientific challenge, but the latter gave it a new impetus” (“Genesis One Reconsidered”).

Modern scientific views on geology and the deep antiquity of the Earth began to be formulated at the very end of the 18th century, beginning especially with the 1788 publication of James Hutton’s *Theory of the Earth*. Even still, it was not until the early 19th century that Hutton’s work began to be taken seriously, causing alarm within some religious circles. To this, the Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers responded in 1804: “It has been alleged that geology, by referring the origin of the globe to a higher antiquity than is assigned to it by the writings of Moses, undermines our faith This is a false alarm. The writings of Moses do not fix the antiquity of the globe” (*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*). In 1814, Chalmers published “Remarks on Cuvier’s Theory of the Earth,” addressing the matter in further detail—a publication often cited by critics as the genesis of the gap theory.

Custance, alongside Payne, begs to differ, arguing in Chapter 1 of his book that gap creation was a view held long prior. Case in point, the *Book of Jasher*, printed in 1751—decades before the works of Hutton and Chalmers—commented on Genesis 1:2, stating “the face of nature was formed *a second time*.”

Custance wound the clock back much further, arguing that gap creation views were held by the likes of King Edgar of England (943–975 C.E.) and Cædmon (circa 600–684 C.E.; sidebar, page 33). Among early Jewish thought, Custance highlights midrashim, collected into Louis Ginsberg’s *The Legends of the Jews*, commenting on Genesis 1: “Nor is this world inhabited by man the first of things earthly created by God [W]orlds before ours” had been “destroyed” (1.1.4). From the 13th-century Zohar, in elaborating on Genesis 2:4: “[T]hese are the generations of the destruction which is signified in verse 2 of chapter 1. The earth was *tohu* and *bohu*. These indeed are the worlds of which it is said that the blessed God created and destroyed,” as quoted in *Without Form and Void*.

Theological differences of various proponents aside—from Judaism to Christianity to Islam—the idea of “an early pre-Adamic catastrophe affecting the whole Earth” was “apparently quite widespread It *certainly* antedates modern geology,” wrote Custance. “[O]ne thing stands out clearly. The [early] writers would *not* have agreed with [17th-century chronologist James] Ussher, that creation occurred 4000 B.C. They *might* very probably have assented to his chronology as

applied to the creation of Adam, but they would have set the creation of the universe (the heavens and the Earth) further back in time by some unstated amount.”

Far from certain later scientific discoveries being the *impetus* for the gap theory, then, they are quite justifiably seen as substantiating it.

‘Planting the Heavens’

Thus far ends our summary of gap creation, looking back on the world that was. Yet we shall not conclude by looking backward. For what is most *inspiring* about the so-called gap theory—yet what unfortunately gets overlooked almost entirely—is *not* looking back in time, at the “gap” pertaining to the Earth.

It is the “gap” pertaining to the heavens—looking forward in time, to the promise of restoration of the wider *universe*. “And I have put My words in thy mouth, And have covered thee in the shadow of My hand, That I may *plant the HEAVENS*,” the Prophet Isaiah quotes God as saying (Isaiah 51:16). Isaiah is looking forward in time to a *cosmic* renewal!

This is another passage commentaries struggle with. “*That I may plant*: This is no doubt the right translation,” states the *Cambridge Bible Commentary*. Yet “[t]he metaphor of ‘planting’ the heavens is strange.” The commentary notes the attempts of “some critics ... changing a letter” to force a different reading. But this peculiar passage is yet another one aptly explained by the gap creation model.

“Apparently all such planets in the entire universe now are waste and empty—decayed (*tohu* and *bohu*)—like the Earth was, as described in Genesis 1:2,” wrote Herbert Armstrong in *Mystery of the Ages*. “But God did not create them in such conditions of decay—like our moon. Decay is not an original created condition—it is a condition *resulting from a process* of deterioration.”

Other biblical passages expound on this subject of universe restoration as part of man’s ultimate purpose and potential. “[Other] verses portray a universe filled with planets in decay and futility—yet as if subjected now to this dead state in hope! ... Could the whole universe with its myriad of other planets have been created for the eventual purpose of sustaining life?” (ibid). The *Cambridge Bible Commentary*, citing Isaiah 51:16, calls this the “ultimate goal of God’s dealings with Israel.” This innate yearning to bring *life* to dead planets is for now only an expensive dream for individuals such as Elon Musk (whose stated goal is to “make life multiplanetary”).

“The creation is pictured as ‘groaning in travail in hope;’” continues *Mystery of the Ages*. “[T]he planets, except for this Earth, are in a state of death, decay and futility—but *not forever*—WAITING” ■

FEEDBACK

I wish only to add my thanks to all those wonderful people who contributed to the summer 2025 Ophel Excavation. Just the thought that a hand can touch an artifact originating in Solomon’s Iron Age simply boggles the mind. And thanks as well to the Armstrong Institute for the educated content and exceptional quality of *Let the Stones Speak*.

YEHUD-MONOSSON, ISRAEL

I so love your content! Both on YouTube and in the magazine. I hope you still have some of the Hebrew magazines available; I want to share your content with the grandkids.

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

I’ve subscribed to your magazine *Let The Stones Speak* for the past 2½ years and thoroughly enjoy it. I subscribe to several other biblical magazines, but I have been reading yours cover to cover. Your articles are very informative, and the maps and pictures you add really are very beneficial. I’ve kept each issue because the information is a wonderful reference. I know you say it’s free, but I would be willing to pay for a subscription.

REDDING, CALIFORNIA

I have a subscription to your magazine *Let the Stones Speak* and look forward to reading each issue when they arrive to me here in Australia. Thank you! I also really enjoy watching your YouTube channel and seeing the archaeological discoveries that confirm the reliability of the Bible. I would love to visit Israel and visit these dig sites one day; it’s a dream of mine. In the meantime, thank you for all you do to present these amazing discoveries for everyone to see. May they listen to the stones.

QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

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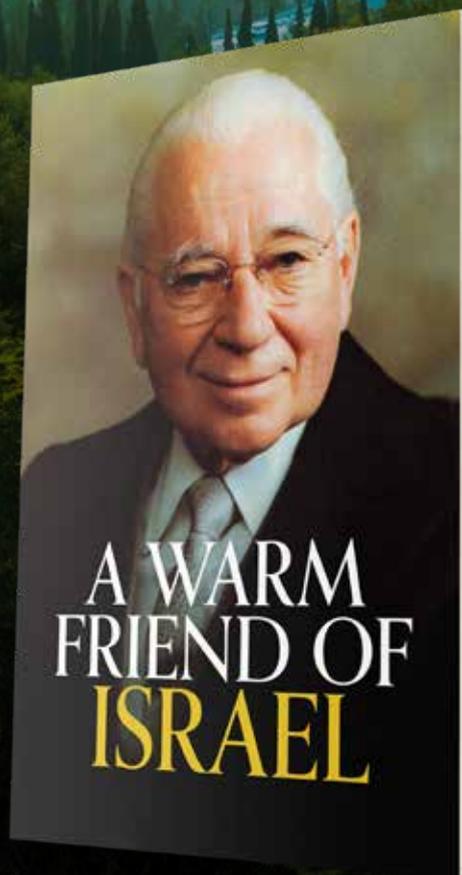
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