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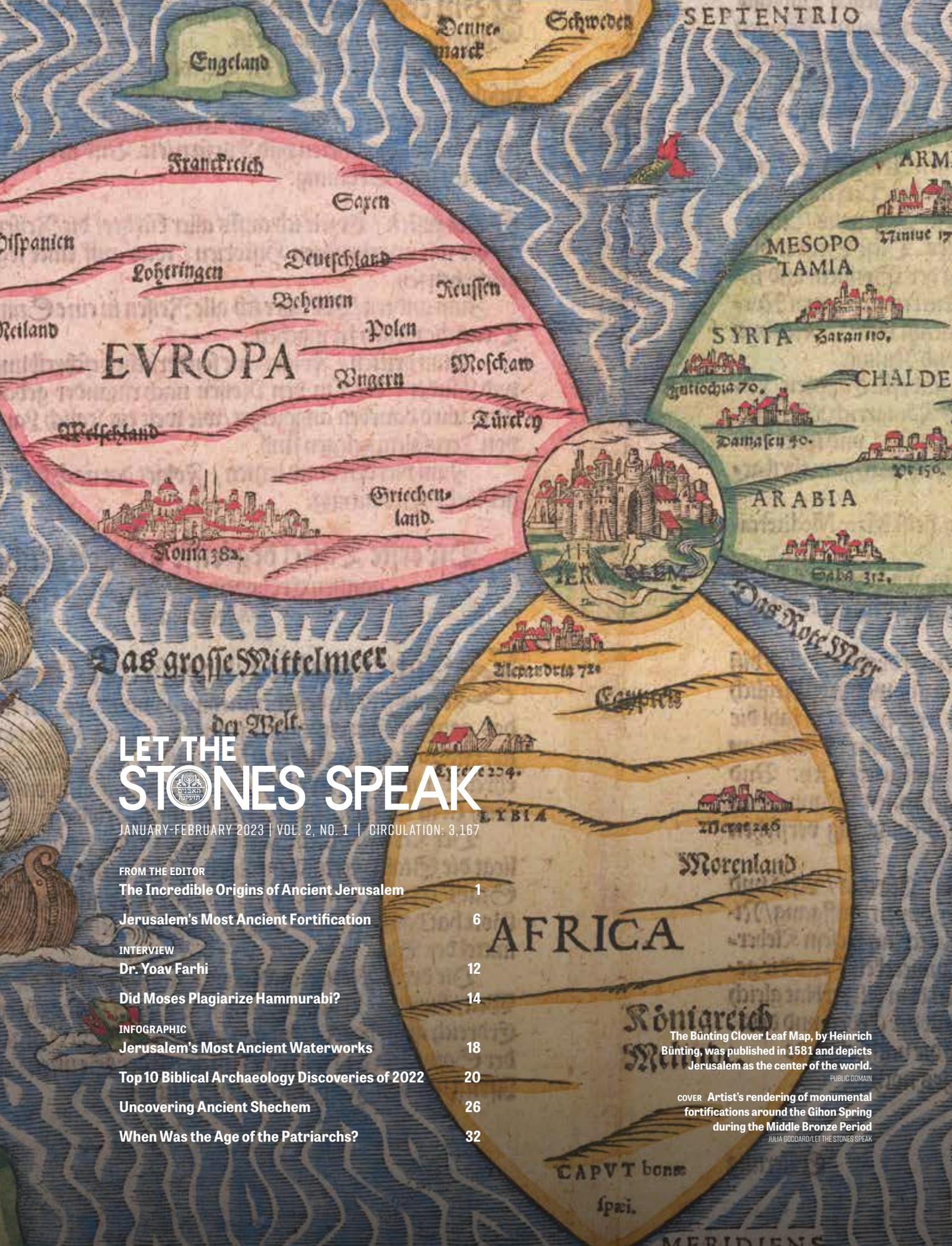
STONES SPEAK



JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2023



ABRAHAM'S  
JERUSALEM



# LET THE STONES SPEAK

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The Bunting Clover Leaf Map, by Heinrich Bunting, was published in 1581 and depicts Jerusalem as the center of the world.

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COVER Artist's rendering of monumental fortifications around the Gihon Spring during the Middle Bronze Period

JULIA BODDARD/LET THE STONES SPEAK



FROM THE EDITOR | GERALD FLURRY

# The Incredible Origins of Ancient Jerusalem

An inspiring overview of the world's most important and famous city

“THE HISTORY OF JERUSALEM IS THE history of the world.” That is the opening line of *Jerusalem*, an illuminating book chronicling the history of this city, written by British historian Simon Sebag Montefiore.

In the introduction, Montefiore describes how absolutely central Jerusalem is in the history of human civilization, especially in the history and theology of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Using examples and anecdotes, he shows that Jerusalem has been a focal point for humanity from the beginning.

He then asks this crucial question: “Of all the places in the world, *why Jerusalem?*”

This question gets to the essence of understanding Jerusalem. Montefiore writes, “The site was remote from the trade routes of the Mediterranean coast; it was short of water, baked in the summer sun, chilled by winter winds, its jagged rocks blistered and inhospitable.” Despite these disadvantages, Jerusalem became the “center of the Earth.” Why?

Anyone who is even the slightest bit familiar with the Bible knows that Jerusalem is at the heart of the biblical narrative. This city is introduced in Genesis and is featured all the way through Chronicles (the last book of the Hebrew Bible according to the original order). But biblical history doesn't just record events that happened in and around Jerusalem. It

helps answer the essential question: Why Jerusalem?

Although the biblical record does not give a detailed or extensive history of earliest Jerusalem, it furnishes more information and insight than most people probably know. In this article, I will review what the Bible records about the origins of the world's most special city.

## The Garden of Eden

The Bible records that the history of mankind begins in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 1, God renewed the face of the Earth and, on the sixth day, created human beings. Genesis 2 records that He placed the first man in this magnificent garden, a small area in the eastern part of a much larger area called Eden (verse 8).

Where was Eden, and this garden within, located? The Bible gives some fascinating clues.

Notice the remarkable geography described in Genesis 2: A great river originated at a point outside the garden, flowed through it, and then divided into four branches (verse 10). The first branch was the Pishon River, which flowed through the land of Havilah. The second, the *Gihon* River, wended through the land of Cush. Third was the Tigris, which ran through Asshur. And finally, the Euphrates flowed through Shinar (verses 11-14).

The historian Josephus shed further light on these four rivers in his epic work *Antiquities of the Jews*. He wrote that the Pishon was associated with the Ganges River, and the Gihon with the Nile. The Tigris and Euphrates retain their original names today.

As we will see, the biblical record suggests that the greater land of Eden was what we now think of as the entire coastal region on the east side of the Mediterranean Sea—the general area surrounding *Jerusalem*. It may also have included the region of the Red Sea in the south, down to the conspicuously named port city and gulf of *Aden* (a location tradition claims is as old as human history).

It is possible that this garden, where God placed Adam and Eve, was located precisely where present-day Jerusalem is located.

Genesis 2 strongly indicates that the garden existed near the opening of the Gihon Spring. This spring, which is today a mere trickle compared to what it once was, originates just outside of what is now the Old City of Jerusalem.

The biblical description suggests that the Earth at this time was a paradise with a mild climate, and that these four tributaries were wide, gentle rivers that flowed eastward toward the seas. Geologic changes, especially caused by the biblical Flood, would have since altered the drainage pattern. As a result, these rivers now have separate sources and flow in different directions.

Verse 10 says the source that divided into four rivers “went out of Eden.” This indicates that the Garden of Eden was perhaps the highest point in the land. Jerusalem is not the highest point in the region today. However, Scripture reveals that when the Messiah comes, a great earthquake will *elevate Jerusalem*—and open up rivers of living waters (Zechariah 14:8-10). A great river will flow eastward out of God’s temple structure into the Dead Sea (Ezekiel 47). Once this sea becomes full of living water, it will spill over and streams will flow through the surrounding region.

Jerusalem is repeatedly named in the Bible as God’s “holy mountain” (Isaiah 11:9; Joel 3:17; etc). Ezekiel 28:13-14 use exactly the same language in connection to the Garden of Eden: “[T]hou wast in *Eden the garden of God* ... [T]hou wast upon the *holy mountain* ...” Could it be because these two are one and the same—*Jerusalem* and the *Garden of Eden*—both God’s “holy mountain”?

Isn’t it logical to think that when God makes this change, He will be restoring the region’s geography to the way it was when He first created man? *The picture the Bible paints for the future could reveal how conditions were originally created in the past.* (Some scholars, such as Dr. Ernest Martin, have even gone so far as to

# THE LAND OF EDEN

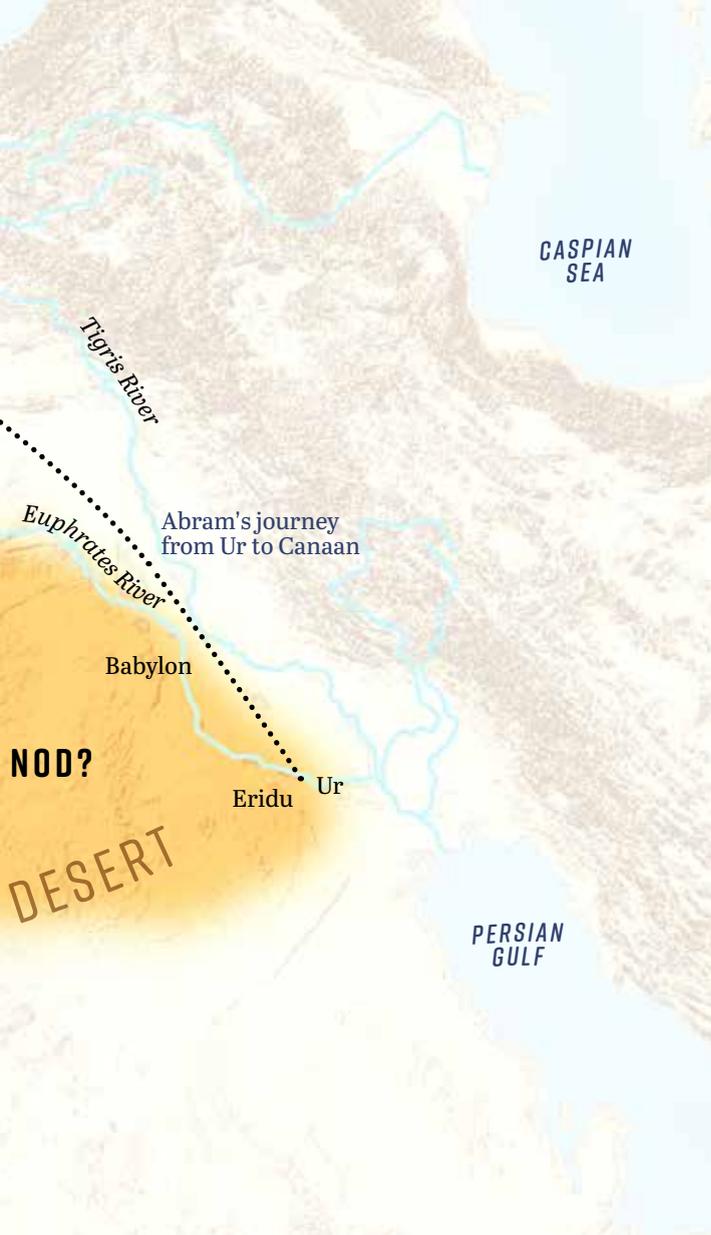


compare the biblical layout of the Garden of Eden with that of the tabernacle and temple.)

Genesis 3:23-24 show that after Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, God removed them from the Garden of Eden. He then placed an angel with a flaming sword “at the east of the garden of Eden,” indicating that Adam and his family settled in territory east of the Garden of Eden.

There is further evidence of this in Joshua 3:16, which records that when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land around 2,500 years later, they returned through “Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan.” This city was in the region of “the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea,” an obvious reference to the Dead Sea, further confirmation that Adam and Eve settled on land east of the garden.

More recently, archaeologists have associated Tel ed-Damiyeh, ancient ruins near the Jabbok River, with the “city of Adam.” Nearby is Damia Bridge, or Adam



Bridge, an ancient bridge that crosses the Jordan River. All these signs suggest that Adam and Eve settled in territory *adjacent east* of the Garden of Eden, in the region we now call the Jordan Valley.

When Adam’s son Cain murdered his brother Abel, God exiled him from the land of his mother and father. “And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden” (Genesis 4:16). We do not know the precise borders of the land of Nod, but this passage makes clear that it was *further east* of the Jordan Valley region, where Adam and Eve had settled. “Land of Nod” means “land of wandering,” an apt description of the barren deserts of Arabia.

Verse 17 says that after they arrived in the land of Nod, Cain and his descendants built the first city, called Enoch. Some have associated Enoch with Eridu, an archaeological site in southern Mesopotamia and one of the world’s oldest cities. Enoch has also been

associated with Babylon, which is in the same general area. Both biblical as well as ancient Sumerian and Babylonian records clearly identify Babylon as the seat of rebellious government and pagan religion. Genesis 10 and 11, for example, record that the arch-rebel Nimrod, the tyrant who built the tower of Babel, was headquartered in Babylon. Isn’t it rational to think that Nimrod would have established his headquarters in the same region—and perhaps rebuilt the city—of his forefather Cain, the original rebel and tyrant?

## Melchizedek Founds Jerusalem

Roughly 2,000 years after Cain, biblical history records the founding of Israel through a man named Abram. Genesis 12:1 says that God told him, “Get thee out of thy country ... unto the land that I will show thee.” Abram lived in the Babylonian city of Ur, in the same general region as Cain and Nimrod—a region historical records show was steeped in paganism. God told Abram to leave and relocate to a land He had chosen.

Abram obeyed and “went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came” (verse 5).

When Abram left Ur and traveled to Canaan, he reversed Cain’s journey. Rebellious Adam and Cain traveled *away* from Eden. Obedient and faithful Abram traveled west from Babylon *back toward Eden*.

After Abram obeyed God and returned to Canaan, God made this wonderful promise: “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (verse 7). This promise is what made this land, Canaan, the “Promised Land.” It was to this land that God would later bring the nation of Israel, which comprised the descendants of this patriarch. This land was clearly very special to God. Why was it special? Is it because the Garden of Eden, the place where God first created man, was in this same area?

Abram moved to Canaan in the early 19th century B.C.E.; this is when God made this epic promise. Archaeological excavations and ancient writings confirm that the land of Canaan at this time was already home to some important cities—including a newly emerging city, Jerusalem.

Genesis 14 describes Abram’s encounter with “Melchizedek king of Salem.” Who was this great king? Verses 1 through 17 describe Abram’s great military victories over four powerful Assyrian kings. Verses 18-20 record that following these victories, “Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was priest of God the Most High. And he blessed him, and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God the Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.’ And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] a tenth of all.”

Abram and Melchizedek clearly had a close relationship. Melchizedek had tremendous affection for Abram,

and this great patriarch, whom God later renamed Abraham, *tithed* to this “king of Salem”! Melchizedek was not only a king, he was also a “*priest of God the Most High*.” This unique individual was called “king of Salem.” “Salem” is translated as “peace” and “completeness.”

The city of Salem eventually became known as *Jeru-salem*. In the Bible, *Salem* is synonymous with the terms *Zion*, *City of David*, *Jebus*, *Moriah* and *Jerusalem*. For example, Psalm 76:3 says, “In Salem also is set His tabernacle, And His dwelling-place in Zion.” A number of scriptures indicate that Melchizedek founded the city of Jerusalem.

Who was Melchizedek, exactly?

Naturally, there exists vast differences in opinion in Judaism, Christianity and even Islam. Yet all three religions recognize the significance of this “priest of God the Most High.” In fact, the Jewish Qumran community of the second and first centuries B.C.E. actually believed—as revealed by the text of the Dead Sea Scrolls—Melchizedek to be a *divine* being who would “atone for” and “forgive the wrongdoings of all their iniquities,” a being who at the “end of days” would usher in “the day of salvation which God spoke through Isaiah the prophet” (11QMelch).

The scroll continues, citing Melchizedek as the one to ultimately fulfill the “jubilee” of Leviticus 25: “For this is the moment of the Year of Grace for Melchizedek. And he will, by his strength, judge the holy ones of God, executing judgement as it is written concerning him in the Songs of David, who said, ‘Elohim has taken his place in the divine council’ [Psalm 82:1; English Standard Version] ... your Elohim is Melchizedek, who will save them from the hand of Belial.”

This circa 100 B.C.E. Jewish text aligns with the later New Testament writings of the Pharisee-schooled Paul (Acts 26:5), who wrote of Melchizedek as being “[w]ithout father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life ...” (Hebrews 7:1-3; King James Version). The first-century B.C.E. Jewish philosopher Philo even titled Melchizedek with the Greek word “Logos” (meaning “spokesman,” “word” or “revelatory thought”).

This level of recognition and even reverence for Melchizedek, by both biblical and extrabiblical sources, and by both Jewish and Christian authors, adds additional significance to his establishment of Jerusalem and also helps underscore the city’s importance to God.

## Abraham’s Sacrifice

The patriarch Abraham loved family. He yearned for a son, yet for decades he and Sarah could not conceive. Nevertheless, God promised him that a son would

come—a son through whom He would give Abraham descendants without number (Genesis 15:1-5). Abraham waited 25 years for this promised son and was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

It was through Isaac that God later gave Abraham the most difficult test of his life—a test unlike any He gave to any other man. This test occurred *in the region of Jerusalem*.

Genesis 22:1-2 state, “And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him: ‘Abraham’; and he said: ‘Here am I.’ And He said: ‘Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the LAND OF MORIAH; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.’”

The land of Moriah *includes Jerusalem*. 2 Chronicles 3:1 records that the first temple was later constructed by King Solomon “at Jerusalem in mount Moriah.”

Genesis 22:10-12 show that Abraham, in a supreme act of faith, was prepared to sacrifice his son—but that God stopped him just in time. After this, God knew that Abraham would withhold *nothing* from Him. *This was not a mere act of obedience*. It may have been an act of faith without parallel by a created man. And it happened right around Jerusalem, God’s special city.

## God Establishes His Chosen Nation

God had promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:5, 7). This promise transferred down through Isaac, then Jacob. Sometime around the 17th century B.C.E., Jacob and his large family were forced due to famine to move to Egypt where his son Joseph was a high official. The Israelites lived in Goshen, the choicest region in Egypt, found favor with the Egyptians, and prospered.

After Joseph died, a new king arose in Egypt “who knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). He was concerned about the rising power of the Israelites and grew to despise them. For many years, the Israelites received terribly harsh treatment from the Egyptians. God heard their anguished cries and promised to return the Israelites to the land He had promised Abraham—*back to the area of Jerusalem!*

God then raised up a man of character who feared God and obeyed His commands: Moses. Under Moses’s leadership, God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. He brought them through the Red Sea and led them to Mount Sinai. At Sinai, God gave Israel His law (Exodus 20). God also gave Moses detailed plans for the construction of a tabernacle (Exodus 25-30). At the heart of this sacred tent was the ark of the covenant, which was covered by the mercy seat, symbolizing

God's own throne. The Israelites built this impressive, movable tabernacle (Exodus 35-40). This tabernacle would later be replaced by a spectacular temple at the headquarters in Jerusalem.

## David Conquers Jerusalem

Before He took Israel to the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to send spies into the land to preview the marvelous inheritance He was giving them (Numbers 13). However, all but two of the spies brought back a faithless report, and the people grew fearful. They didn't trust God to deliver the land to them—and God cursed them (Numbers 14). That generation of Israelites ended up wandering around the wilderness for 40 years.

After that generation of Israelites died, the next generation entered the Promised Land under Joshua. They crossed the Jordan River, routed the walled city of Jericho, and settled in Canaan. This prosperous land, flowing with milk and honey, was the land of their father Abraham. An abundance of archaeological evidence today confirms the biblical record of Jericho, including its miraculous destruction by God—evidence that the walls really did “come tumbling down” (see our article “Uncovering the Bible's Buried Cities: Jericho,” at [armstronginstitute.org/309](http://armstronginstitute.org/309)).

During the period of the judges, Jerusalem was called *Jebus* (Joshua 18:28; Judges 19:10). Although the city was on the border of the inheritance of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, *Jebus* remained inhabited by the *Jebusites*, a Canaanite people descended from Ham. The city was well fortified, and the *Jebusites* were confident it could not be conquered.

Israel's greatest king, David, assumed rulership a little before 1000 B.C.E. He was about 30 years old. For the first seven years, David ruled Judah from the city of Hebron, which was situated about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. But King David wanted to control *Jebus*. From the psalms that he wrote, it's obvious he knew this was God's chosen city; he was aware of its glorious history with Abraham and Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Psalm 76:3). As soon as he was crowned king over the northern tribes of Israel, uniting the nation, he set about conquering *Jebus*. These events are recorded in 2 Samuel 5 and 1 Chronicles 11.

2 Samuel 5:6 records the *Jebusites* taunting Israel's king, telling him that even blind and deaf people could defend the well-fortified city. David then made a bold offer to his troops: “Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the *Jebusites*, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain” (verse 8; KJV). Joab accepted the challenge and penetrated the city through underground tunnels used to collect water.

King David's conquest of Jerusalem marked the start of a golden period in Israel's history. For a brief moment, the entire nation united under a godly king with Jerusalem as the capital.

Under King David, Jerusalem was once again at the center of God's work on Earth! The history of this city from the period of King David onward is well documented, not only in the Bible but also in secular historical records and by archaeological evidence.

## King Solomon's Temple

Sometime after David took control of Jerusalem, he was inspired to build a permanent home for the ark (2 Samuel 7). God was pleased with David's desire to build the temple, but He did not want David constructing the building. So God allowed him only to plan and *prepare* for the temple construction. David embraced the opportunity with all his heart!

1 Chronicles 22:5 says that from the moment he received this instruction, David “prepared abundantly”! He gave and gathered a hundred thousand talents of gold and a million talents of silver, as well as vast amounts of brass and iron, timber and stone (verse 14). During the latter years of his reign, King David devoted his energies to preparing for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem.

Why did David want to build God's house in Jerusalem? “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains” (2 Samuel 7:2). David was bothered by the fact that he lived in a magnificent palace and the ark of the covenant remained in a tent. To him, this was a travesty, and he wanted to rectify it. David wanted to build God a house so impressive that it would be famous throughout the whole world—to magnify God's name forever!

David wanted the temple in Jerusalem to be the center of worship for the whole nation. That is why he was so excited to build God's house. Everything in Israel would revolve around Jerusalem and the temple!

Toward the end of his life, David secured the land on which the temple would be constructed. God sent the Prophet Gad with a message for him: “Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the *Jebusite*” (2 Samuel 24:18). The king visited this man and offered to buy his land. But this *Jebusite* man offered to simply give it to his king (verses 20-23). David insisted on paying for it (verse 24). He wanted to give an offering to God, and he wanted there to be some *sacrifice* in it.

Once he acquired the land, King David built an altar on it and made offerings to God.

The location of that altar ended up being the exact location of the temple that Solomon would build.



# Jerusalem's Most Ancient Fortification

A look at the Abrahamic-era  
construction around the Gihon Spring

BY BRENT NAGTEGAAL

Some of Israel's most important archaeological discoveries were made by accident. The first Dead Sea Scroll was discovered when a young boy threw stones into a cave in Qumran and heard the sound of broken ceramics. The Ketef Hinnom scrolls, which contain the oldest portion of the Bible, going back 2,700 years, were discovered by a bored teenager pickaxing through what turned out to be a false floor of a tomb. It's no surprise then, that Jerusalem's oldest monumental construction also took archaeologists completely by surprise when it was uncovered.

When Haifa University professor Ronny Reich was asked in 1995 to conduct a salvage excavation on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority in the area surrounding the Gihon Spring, he had no expectations of uncovering anything remarkable.



When Reich started digging, the surrounding area was already the most excavated site in Israel. Given the extensive excavations undertaken by archaeologists Charles Warren, Montague Parker and Kathleen Kenyon, Reich thought the preserved remains would be piecemeal and fragmentary. It wasn't long, however, before Reich and fellow archaeologist Eli Shukron realized, in Reich's words, that he was "utterly wrong."

The archaeologists uncovered not only some of the most impressive construction in Jerusalem's history, it was also the *earliest construction* ever found in Jerusalem! The ruins dated back 3,800 years, almost 1,000 years before King David controlled the city. The Gihon excavations by Reich and Shukron revolutionized our understanding of ancient Jerusalem! Here is a brief look at what they found.

### The Spring Tower

It is a rule of urban development, past and present, that a city's water source needs to be secure. In most of Israel's ancient sites, this meant being able to access the water—be it a spring or shaft to groundwater—without having to go outside the city walls. Jerusalem's only constant water source is the perennial karstic spring known as the Gihon. The exit point for water from the Gihon is near the bottom of the east side of the Eastern Hill (in what is known today as the Kidron Valley).

Given this reality, it probably should not have been too much of a surprise when Reich and Shukron uncovered a massive fortification tower encircling the Gihon Spring. After studying both the masonry and pottery, the archaeologists dated the walls to the Middle Bronze Age II (around 1800 B.C.E.).

The walls on the south, east and north of the structure are massive. The southern wall, for example, is 7 meters thick. The walls are constructed in the cyclopean masonry style. This style of construction was named by the Greeks, who considered the masonry so impressive that it must have been built by the mythical giant cyclopes race. The cyclopean style, in which massive unworked stones are fitted together in a fluid pattern, is typical of the Middle Bronze Age.

Today the area around the Gihon Spring is managed by the City of David Foundation, and tourists are able to access the bottom of the Spring Tower. From here, one can look up and get a sense for the grand scale of the fortification. Some of the largest stones in the wall are estimated to weigh 2 to 3 metric tons. According to Reich, these stones are the largest to appear in a Jerusalem construction until almost 2,000 years later with King Herod's construction of the Temple Mount.

### The Fortified Passageway

In addition to the massive Spring Tower, Reich and Shukron also discovered two parallel walls that intersected with the tower and headed west up the hill. Constructed in the same cyclopean masonry style, these walls are also monumental. The northern wall (Wall 108) is especially large, with a preservation height of 8 meters. Excavators were able to follow these walls for a distance of 24 meters up the hill. While excavating these walls, Reich found a corridor between the two walls that was full of stone fill. After removing the fill, it was clear that it was originally a fortified corridor used by the city's inhabitants to access the Gihon Spring.



“Undoubtedly,” wrote Reich in 2018, “this fill of earth and stones was intentionally deposited between these walls and postdates their construction” (*Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*). Critically, the latest pottery sherds found inside the fill in the corridor dated to the Middle Bronze Age II (1800–1600 B.C.E.). Also in the eastern part of the corridor, Middle Bronze II pottery was discovered on the original floor. This allowed archaeologists to date the entirety of the two massive walls to the same period as the Spring Tower—that is, to Middle Bronze Age II.

### The Rock-Cut Pool

Finally, Reich and Shukron uncovered one last feature in addition to the Spring Tower and fortified

passageway: a large rock-cut pool that ran alongside the southern wall of the corridor. Perhaps significantly, the upper part of this pool was never plastered. According to Reich, this suggests the water level never reached as high as the top of the cutting. However, in the eastern portion of the rock channel, the pool descends even lower, creating what excavators call a “round chamber.” During the Middle Bronze Age and later, water from the Gihon Spring would have collected in this pool.

This chamber is also directly below a break in the southern wall of the fortified corridor. According to excavators, this meant that Jerusalem’s ancient inhabitants could walk down through the fortified corridor then turn to the right, where they would have been able to lower their vessels down into the pool to collect the water.

Today there is no water in the round chamber. According to Reich and Shukron, the pool stopped receiving water from the Gihon Spring in the eighth century B.C.E. when the round chamber and larger rock-cut pool were filled with debris and flattened to make room for the construction of domestic structures.

The logic here is consistent with the biblical text, which records that during the late eighth century B.C.E., King Hezekiah overhauled Jerusalem’s waterworks. Most notably, Hezekiah built a 533-meter-long water tunnel carrying water from the Gihon to the southwestern part of the city (2 Chronicles 32:2-4, 30; 2 Kings 20:20). Hezekiah’s tunnel is lower in elevation than the “round chamber,” which makes it impossible for the ancient pool to collect water. When King Hezekiah was done with his tunnel, the water that would have filled the “round chamber” instead filled the Siloam Pool.

The pool’s construction appears to be mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah in a condemnation of King Hezekiah and the people of Judah for their rebellion against God: “Ye made also a ditch between the two walls *for the water of the old pool*: but ye have not looked unto the *maker thereof*, neither had respect unto *him that fashioned it long ago*” (Isaiah 22:11; King James Version). Isaiah refers to God as the ultimate “maker” of this pool. But through whom did God make it? Given the dating of the pool to the Middle Bronze Age, is it possible that *Melchizedek*, the mysterious king and priest of Jerusalem, built this original pool which fell out of use when Hezekiah’s tunnel was created?

### Warren’s Shaft

It just so happened that when Reich and Shukron started their excavations in the vicinity of the Gihon Spring, the edge of their area came right up next to one of Jerusalem’s most famous underground caverns, known today as Warren’s Shaft. They decided to connect the new excavation area to the underground



The Spring Tower

cavern to ensure ease of passage for tourists to go from the horizontal portion of the shaft system directly to the spring and then continue to the entrance of Hezekiah's tunnel. This also provided an opportunity for a fresh investigation of the shaft by Reich and Shukron.

Since its discovery in 1867 by Sir Charles Warren, the shaft system has animated biblical scholars with its tantalizing connection to how Jerusalem was conquered by David's men. Connecting two passages of scripture found in Samuel and Chronicles, scholars considered this to be the underground passage used by Joab to conquer the city around 1000 B.C.E. However, after analyzing the area in their excavations, Reich and Shukron concluded that only the horizontal part of the tunnel was in use during the time of David and was part of the Middle Bronze Age construction. In their view, the vertical portion of the shaft was only connected to the horizontal portion during the eighth century B.C.E. (See infographic, page 18, for a diagram of the entire waterworks.)

According to Reich, the horizontal portion of Warren's Shaft was built in the Middle Bronze Age and intended to link up with the fortified passageway, providing a way for Salemites to bring water into the upper city from the round chamber of the pool. They base this on a number of factors. First, the horizontal



The fortified passageway

portion of the tunnel was cut directly through softer limestone and sits atop a much harder form of rock. The walls protecting the fortified passageway were also built directly on top of this hard layer of stone. Practically, it also makes sense that there would be no need for two access points to the water right next to each other during the same period.

## IS IT REALLY DATED TO THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE?

**I**N 2012, ARCHAEOLOGISTS EXCAVATED the area on the northeast side of the Spring tower, near the bottom of the Kidron Valley. As part of their work, the team took carbon samples from a cross section of exposed earth that is directly under the northeastern corner of the Spring Tower. After studying the results of the carbon-14 testing, the team redated the entire Spring Tower. The tower, they claimed, was actually built 1,000 years later, around the time of the united monarchy.

In 2018, Reich contested this conclusion. While he accepted the dating of the sample, he explained that the sample was taken from a location that was likely contaminated by later-period material. This is because this area of the tower is in the Kidron Valley riverbed. This meant that the material excavated and sampled under the northeast corner of the tower was likely to have washed into the area during a flood event. "I believe that the data presented

... cannot unequivocally guarantee that the samples under discussion were deposited *in situ* before the Spring Tower was constructed. Obtaining samples for carbon dating from this location was incorrect."

Furthermore, redating the whole fortification to Iron Age II ignores the presence of Middle Bronze pottery along the entire 24-meter fortified passageway. And then there's the cyclopean construction style of the walls of both the Spring Tower and

Second, although the whole tunnel was excavated by Parker, and then Yigal Shiloh in the 1980s, there was still some datable material preserved along the lower portion of the tunnel, right by the entrance of the vertical shaft itself. Critically, among the rock-chip remains from the quarrying of the lower portion near the vertical shaft, they found eighth-century B.C.E. pottery, long after the Middle Bronze Age.

Thus, a new theory arises: Initially, when Hezekiah's tunnel was created, all the water from the Gihon Spring was diverted to the Siloam Pool in the southwest of the city. Yet it makes sense that the upper part of the city would still need access to the water. Thus, the horizontal portion of the shaft was lowered to access the vertical shaft. Typically, at normal flow through Hezekiah's Tunnel, the water from the spring would not collect to a sufficient depth at the bottom of the vertical shaft to easily drop and fill a bucket. However, the recent discovery of remains of an eighth-century B.C.E. sluice gate at the southern end of Hezekiah's Tunnel (see page 22) could certainly raise the water level collecting at the bottom of Warren's Shaft. Thus, this would make it possible for the upper part of the city to access the Gihon through the Warren's Shaft system during the eighth century B.C.E. ■



The Middle Bronze Age round chamber where water from the Gihon Spring collected

the giant passageway. This style of construction is a trademark of the Middle Bronze Age across Israel, but not Iron Age II. Similar construction can be found at other Middle Bronze sites such as Tel Rumeida in Hebron, Tel Gezer and Tel Balata (ancient Shechem).

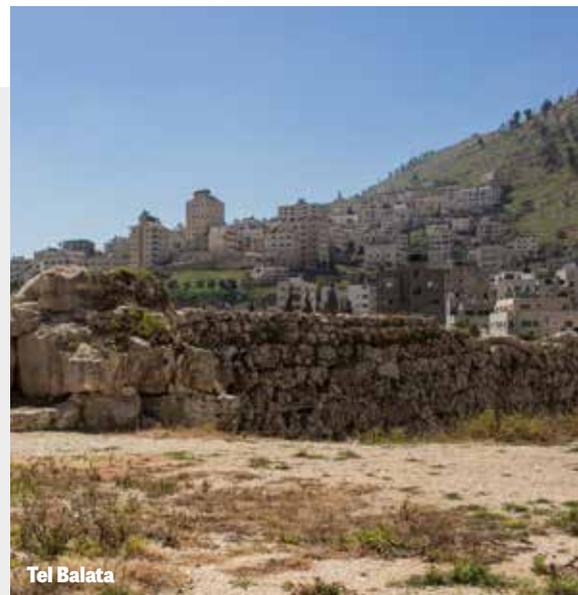
When you weigh all the evidence, it is impossible, to conclusively redate the Spring Tower and giant passageway out of the Middle Bronze Period. ■



Large stones at the base of the Abrahamic-period gate complex at Tel Rumeida



Foundations of the Canaanite projecting tower at Tel Gezer



Tel Balata



## INTERVIEW

# Dr. Yoav Farhi

In December, Prof. Uzi Leibner from Hebrew University announced the discovery of an exceptionally rare half-shekel silver coin. Discovered during the 2022 Ophel excavation, which was sponsored by the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology, this remarkable coin was minted in the third year of the Great Revolt.

The coin was analyzed by numismatics expert Dr. Yoav Farhi, the coin specialist on the excavation team and curator of the Kadman Numismatic Pavilion at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv. Dr. Farhi visited the institute to discuss the coin, as well as the subject of ancient coinage, with *Let the Stones Speak* assistant managing editor Brent Nagtegaal. The following interview has been edited for clarity and length.

**BRENT NAGTEGAAL:** Thanks for visiting us today. Let's begin with this extremely rare silver coin. What can you tell us about the coin and its significance?

**YOAV FARHI:** As you know, we have many coins found in the excavation. But this one is really unique and rare. Most coins found in excavations are bronze, but this one is silver. It's a half-shekel silver coin that was minted during the third year of the Great Revolt, which lasted between 66 and 70 C.E. Very few silver coins of the revolt period have been found by archaeologists in excavations. This specific coin was made in the third year of the revolt. We have only three coins like this found in Jerusalem, out of tens of thousands, so this is really rare in Jerusalem.

**BN:** Most revolt coins are made from bronze. But this one is silver. Why the difference?

**YF:** OK, so let's go back a little bit. First, understand that the coins minted by the rebels in Jerusalem between 66 to 70—five years of coins—actually replaced other coins used by Jews before the revolt. Many of these were silver coins, and it is also part of a series. During the revolt, they had the quarter shekel, the half shekel and one shekel.

**BN:** Is this metric related to the weight itself or its value?

**YF:** It's the denomination of the coin. It's the weight, but also the name of the coin; it's also written on the coin. This by itself is something very rare. Most ancient coins do not bear their denomination. Here we have a half-shekel silver coin: a Jewish coin written in the ancient Hebrew script from the third year of the revolt. This half-shekel coin contains about 7 grams of

silver. The full shekel had about 14 grams. These coins were minted very intentionally. The idea was to replace the Tyrian silver coins from Tyre in Lebanon—“Phoenicia” back then—that were used to pay the half-shekel tribute to the temple by every Jewish man.

**BN:** Did they pay this half shekel once a year or every time they visited Jerusalem?

**YF:** Once a year you had to contribute this money for the operation of the temple. From the second century B.C.E. up to the revolt, Tyrian coins were used by Jews for the temple tax because they were very high in silver—very pure.

The problem many Jews had with the Tyrian coins is that they had the face of the Tyrian god Melqart/Heracles. And on the back, there was an eagle. Both symbols are problematic for the Jews. So the Jews, who the Romans did not allow to mint their own silver coins, used the revolt as an opportunity to replace the Tyrian coins.

Coins are very symbolic. Striking a new coin was not unimportant; it provided the Jews an opportunity to develop their own national symbol. With this coin, it not only showed the Romans, “We can strike silver coins without your permission,” it also replaced the somewhat offensive coins that were used for the temple tax.

As you can see on the coin that we have found, there are no faces, and there are no gods. On one side, you have temple utensils—a goblet or chalice. And on the other, you have a branch with three pomegranates. These symbols are all related to the temple. The inscriptions here are in the ancient Hebrew script; the writing on the Tyrian coins was Greek. Of course, these coins were used for currency other than just the temple service.

But remember, this was during a war. This wasn’t the time for people to buy land or homes; it’s just not the time. These silver coins were not usually used for regular transactions; it’s not like you buy bread with a silver coin. It’s for expensive

one difference: the date. On one side the inscription reads, *Yerushalayim hakdoshah*, which means “holy Jerusalem” or “Jerusalem the holy.” And on the other side, it reads either *shekel Israel*, which is “shekel of Israel,”



**The half-shekel coin of the third year of the Great Revolt**

transactions. But their main use was for the temple.

**BN:** And we believe that these coins were minted in Jerusalem?

**YF:** Yes, in Jerusalem.

**BN:** Have we found the mint?

**YF:** No. Unfortunately, not only here, but worldwide, we have almost no mints found in history. When we consider a mint in this period, it’s not like today, where we have a big building with the title “Mint” on it. At this time, the mint was more like two guys with a hammer, chisel and some other tools. They would prepare the flans, and possibly also the dies, and then strike the coins. Maybe we will be lucky enough to find the original mint. But so far, we don’t have it.

**BN:** You mentioned the writing on these coins and that it was ancient Hebrew. The third year has a certain inscription—what was that?

**YF:** Actually, all these series of half shekels and shekels have the same legends, except with

or *hatsi hashekel*, which is “half shekel.” And then there is the chalice in the center of the coin. Above the chalice are two letters—again two ancient Hebrew letters, not the date in numbers—and it’s written *shin gimel*, which means *shanah gimel*: “Year Three.”

**BN:** Right, the third letter of the alphabet.

**YF:** Yes, the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And this is the only thing that changed between those coins. So on the coins of “year A,” Year One, you’ll have the *aleph*, and on the coins of Year Two you’ll have the *bet*. Then you have the *gimel*, you have the *dalet*, and you have the *heh* for the fifth year. So this is the only thing that changed between the coins. But the inscriptions—*Yerushalayim hakdoshah* (“Jerusalem the holy”) and *hatsi hashekel* (“half shekel”) or the shekel—those are the standard. Although it depends on the denomination, of course.

**BN:** Let’s discuss ancient coins more generally. You are a numismatist; you love to study coins. Can you tell

us a little about the important purpose or significance of coins in archaeology?

**VF:** What is so amazing, in my opinion, when you're dealing with coins, is that you have so much information on such a tiny object. Sometimes the coins are really, really small. Here we speak about a coin which is about 20 millimeters in diameter. Some coins are 5 millimeters, or 7 millimeters—really tiny. And you have a whole world of symbols, of inscriptions, of imaginations on the coin. For archaeologists, finding a coin in excavation can be significant for several reasons. First, it helps us date the layer we're excavating. If we find the coins that are typical to the revolt, we know we are in a layer related to the revolt. And above it, we will have coins dealing with the later Roman period, or the Byzantine, Islamic periods, etc. So coins help us date the layer we are excavating.

Second, coins give us information about different aspects of what those people back then wanted to tell others. Anciently, it wasn't like it is today, where you have all kinds of media to communicate with—we have the Internet, Facebook, newspapers. Back then, the main source of media was the coin. You minted your message to others on your coins. This coin then changed hands. It moved from one to another, from one place to another, and it transported the message.

When I study a coin and read the inscription, I'm trying to go back to those people, trying to understand what they wanted to say. I'm trying to look at the world through their eyes, and through the symbols that they put on the coin, and the inscriptions that they put on the coin. This is also why coins are important. They not only give us a date, they tell us about the people who lived and about their ideas, their wishes, how they saw the world, and how they saw the situation at the time the coin was minted.

**BN:** Right, and that's what makes this revolt coin so special. It's a message from the Jewish people in Judea from 2,000 years ago.

**VF:** Exactly. When they say *Yerushalayim hakdoshah*, "Jerusalem the holy," this is what they want to say: "holy Jerusalem." This is what they had in their heads while they were fighting the Romans for their independence.

**BN:** What a special discovery. Well, thank you for taking some time with us. We appreciated your part in analyzing the coins from the Ophel excavations and bringing to light this silver half shekel.

**VF:** Thank you very much, and we hope to have more coins next season. ■

# Did Moses Plagiarize Ham

The answer might surprise you.

BY MIHAİLO ZEKIC AND CHRISTOPHER EAMES

**D**ISPLAYED INSIDE THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL building are 23 marble portraits of some of the most influential lawgivers in history. These include figures like Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon Bonaparte, Suleiman the Magnificent, King Edward I, Maimonides and the Prophet Moses. One of the oldest historical figures represented is Hammurabi, king of Babylon.

Hammurabi ruled sometime in the 19th to 18th centuries B.C.E. and is famous for authoring a legal text known today as the Code of Hammurabi. The code, which is inscribed on a giant finger-shaped basalt stele, was discovered by French archaeologists in the early 20th century during excavations in Susa, Iran. The office of the Architect of the Capitol calls it "one of the earliest surviving legal codes."

One of the most remarkable (and most discussed) aspects of Hammurabi's law code is the striking similarities it has with some of the laws found in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Moses, the author (or rather, scribe) of the Torah, lived in the 15th century B.C.E., roughly 300 years after Hammurabi (see page 33). The Bible says that Moses received his laws by divine revelation.

Following the discovery of the Babylonian stele, many scholars alleged that Moses plagiarized at least some of his laws from Hammurabi. Such individuals notably included 19th-century German Assyriologist and Old Testament scholar Friedrich Delitzsch, who argued that the Mosaic law was crafted based upon early Babylonian laws. Prof. David Wright similarly argues that the Mosaic law was "directly, primarily, and throughout dependent upon the Laws of Hammurabi

# murabi?



MOSES



HAMMURABI

... a creative rewriting of Mesopotamian sources” (*Inventing God’s Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi*).

Naturally, many Bible scholars reject these theories. In the view of Cambridge’s regius professor of Hebrew in the mid-19th century, David Winton Thomas, “There is no ground for assuming any direct borrowing by the Hebrew from the Babylonian. Even where the two sets of laws differ little in the letter, they differ much in the spirit.”

Both sides seem to make a compelling case. Can we know who is right? Was the Mosaic law a direct copy of existing Babylonian laws? Or were these two separate law codes created independently? Is it even possible that Hammurabi was exposed to some of the laws eventually documented by Moses in the Torah?

### Code of Hammurabi vs. Mosaic Law

Let’s first examine some of the laws of the Code of Hammurabi and compare them with that of the Bible. Certain laws, naturally, bear more resemblance than others.

A noticeable number of Hammurabi’s laws parallel Exodus 20-23, the passage outlining the Ten Commandments and other statutes. For example, the first law of Hammurabi’s code reads (according to the translation by late English archaeologist Leonard W. King): “If any one ensnare another, putting a ban upon him, but he cannot prove it, then he that ensnared him shall be put to death.” Compare that to Exodus 20:13, which commands us not to “bear false witness.” Similarly, Exodus 23:1 condemns those who give “a false report.”

Hammurabi’s Law 117 says: “If any one fail to meet a claim for debt, and sell himself, his wife, his son and daughter for money or give them away to forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor, and in the fourth year they shall be set free.” Compare this with Exodus 21:2: “If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.”

Exodus 21 contains provisions protecting the unborn: “And if men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart, and yet no harm follow, he shall be surely fined, according as the woman’s husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follow, then thou shalt give life for life” (verses 22-23). Meanwhile, laws 209 and 210 of the Code of Hammurabi say: “If a man strike a free-born woman so that she lose her unborn child, he shall pay 10 shekels for her loss. If the woman die, his daughter shall be put to death.” Hammurabi, in this case, did not treat the unborn child as a person with equal rights. But he did still include legal repercussions for those who harmed the unborn, which are similar to the laws of Exodus.

Many of the laws in the Code of Hammurabi concern the relationships between slaves and their masters. The last law of the Code, Law 282, reads: “If a slave say to his master: ‘You are not my master,’ if they convict him his master shall cut off his ear.” Compare this with Exodus 21:2, 5-6: “If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. ... But if the servant shall plainly say: I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free; then his master shall bring him unto God [or

‘the judges’], and shall bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.” The circumstances that Moses and Hammurabi wrote of were different; Hammurabi was referring to runaway slaves while Moses wrote of slaves who wished to stay with their masters. But the procedure is similar: The slave would be brought to the authorities and then marked in his ear.

There are also parallels with some of the moral laws outlined in the book of Leviticus. Consider Leviticus 18:6-7: “None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord. The nakedness of thy father, and the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.” The rest of the passage specifies that all kinds of incest—whether of siblings, stepparents, sons- and daughters-in-law, or any others who are closely related—are abominations to God. Now notice Hammurabi’s laws 154, 155 and 157: “If a man be guilty of incest with his daughter, he shall be driven from the place (exiled). If a man betroth a girl to his son, and his son have intercourse with her, but he (the father) afterward defile her, and be surprised, then he shall be bound and cast into the water (drowned). ... If any one be guilty of incest with his mother after his father, both shall be burned.”

It is possible to argue that the laws pointed out above are both similar and dissimilar. Whether or not one set of laws is dependent on the other is still up for debate based on these comparisons.

Perhaps the *most* famous provision in the Code of Hammurabi, and the most alike to that of the Bible, is the law about an “eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.” Here are laws 196, 197 and 200: “If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out. If he break another man’s bone, his bone shall be broken. ... If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.” Compare this with Exodus 21:23-25: “... thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

Recognizing the similarities between these texts, some Christian scholars attempt to redate Hammurabi, claiming he lived several centuries *after* Moses and took many of his laws from Moses. Roy Schultz observed this in his work *Exploring Ancient History*: “Historians conclude that the confusion about the dating of Hammurabi is not important. But the matter takes on great significance when it is realized that historians like to believe that Moses fashioned the Ten Commandments after the famous law code of Hammurabi. This makes it vital to

know if Hammurabi lived before or after Moses.”

Was this Babylonian legal text authored before Moses? Does the Code of Hammurabi undermine the divine authenticity of the Mosaic law? Does the reign of Hammurabi need to be radically redated in order to maintain biblical inerrancy? The answer may come as a surprise.

## The ‘Mighty Prince’ of Babylon

The Bible clearly records that Moses was not the author of the law. Exodus 20:1, for example, says, “God spoke all these words” when the Ten Commandments are introduced. The law delivered at Mount Sinai, and written down by Moses, existed *long before* Moses in the 15th century B.C.E.

This raises the question: Does the Bible record God sharing this law *prior* to Moses?

The book of Genesis records the history of a towering man of God who *predated* Moses by centuries. God revealed His laws to this man, who according to biblical history, spent much of his life in Babylonia. This individual, of course, was Abraham.

Most people know that Abraham was a leading figure in Canaan. Less well known, however, is the fact that Abraham was also a leading personality in Babylon and had a profound influence on the development of Babylonian civilization. This is documented in both the Bible and secular texts. Moreover, there is evidence that suggests Abraham and Hammurabi were contemporaries.

There are a number of different chronologies for Abraham. But while the precise dates for when Abraham lived vary, there is a general consensus that he lived in the first half of the second millennium B.C.E., around the 19th to 18th centuries (see “When Was the Age of the Patriarchs?” page 32). This is a chronological fit with Hammurabi.

It’s also a geopolitical fit. This was the period in which Babylon was ruled by an East Semitic “Amorite” dynasty, of which Hammurabi was the sixth consecutive Amorite ruler. The Bible shows Abraham probably had some contact with this dynasty. Genesis 14:13 records that following his move to Canaan, Abraham was “confederate” with the western Amorites in the region. Ezekiel 16:3 even hints at *Abraham* being an “Amorite,” not racially, but in regard to his geographic origins.

The laws documented by Moses were known to Abraham. The biblical text shows that many of the laws of the Torah were in place *centuries* before Moses finally wrote them down. For example, the separation of clean and unclean animals—described in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14—was in place at the time of Noah (Genesis 6:19-21; 7:1-9). Genesis 2:1-3 show the seventh-day Sabbath was sanctified following the creation

of man, more than 2,500 years before the Fourth Commandment was written in Exodus 20.

Genesis 26:5 says, “... Abraham hearkened to My voice, and *kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.*” Genesis 23:6 identifies Abraham as a “mighty prince” even *before* he migrated to Canaan. Evidence suggests Abraham understood the law and statutes even when he was living in Babylon.

Now what about secular sources? Do any ancient documents outside of the Bible record Abraham’s influence on Mesopotamian civilization?

### Abraham in Babylon— in Secular History

Josephus, the respected first-century C.E. historian, wrote in *Antiquities of the Jews* (1.7.1): “He [Abraham] was a person of great sagacity, both for understanding all things, and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his opinions.” Josephus specifically credited Abraham for teaching Mesopotamia astronomy to point to the Creator of the heavens. If he was a renowned teacher of the physical sciences, surely he also would have taught the Mesopotamians the laws of the God who made the heavens?

The third-century B.C.E. Babylonian historian Berossus wrote: “In the 10th generation after the Flood, there was among the Chaldeans *a man righteous and great, and skillful in the celestial science*” (emphasis added). While Abraham is not named explicitly here, Josephus commented that Berossus was describing none other than Abraham (who, according to Genesis 11, was on the scene in Chaldea 10 generations after the Flood).

The second-century C.E. Clement of Alexandria cited an ancient hymn about a “certain unique man, an offshoot from far back of the race of the Chaldeans,” who was “knowledgeable” among his population and a man who had a relationship with the mighty God. The first-century B.C.E. historian Nicolaus of Damascus also wrote of Abraham’s prominence before his sojourn in Canaan.

Eusebius, the fourth-century C.E. Roman historian, cited an earlier source by a man named Eupolemus (second century B.C.E.), titled *Concerning the Jews of Assyria*. Quoting this source, Eusebius wrote that Abraham “surpassed all men in nobility and wisdom, who was also the inventor of astronomy and the Chaldaic



*Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law, by Gustave Dore, and the Code of Hammurabi (inset)*

art, and pleased God well by his zeal towards religion” (*Praeparatio Evangelica*, 9.17).

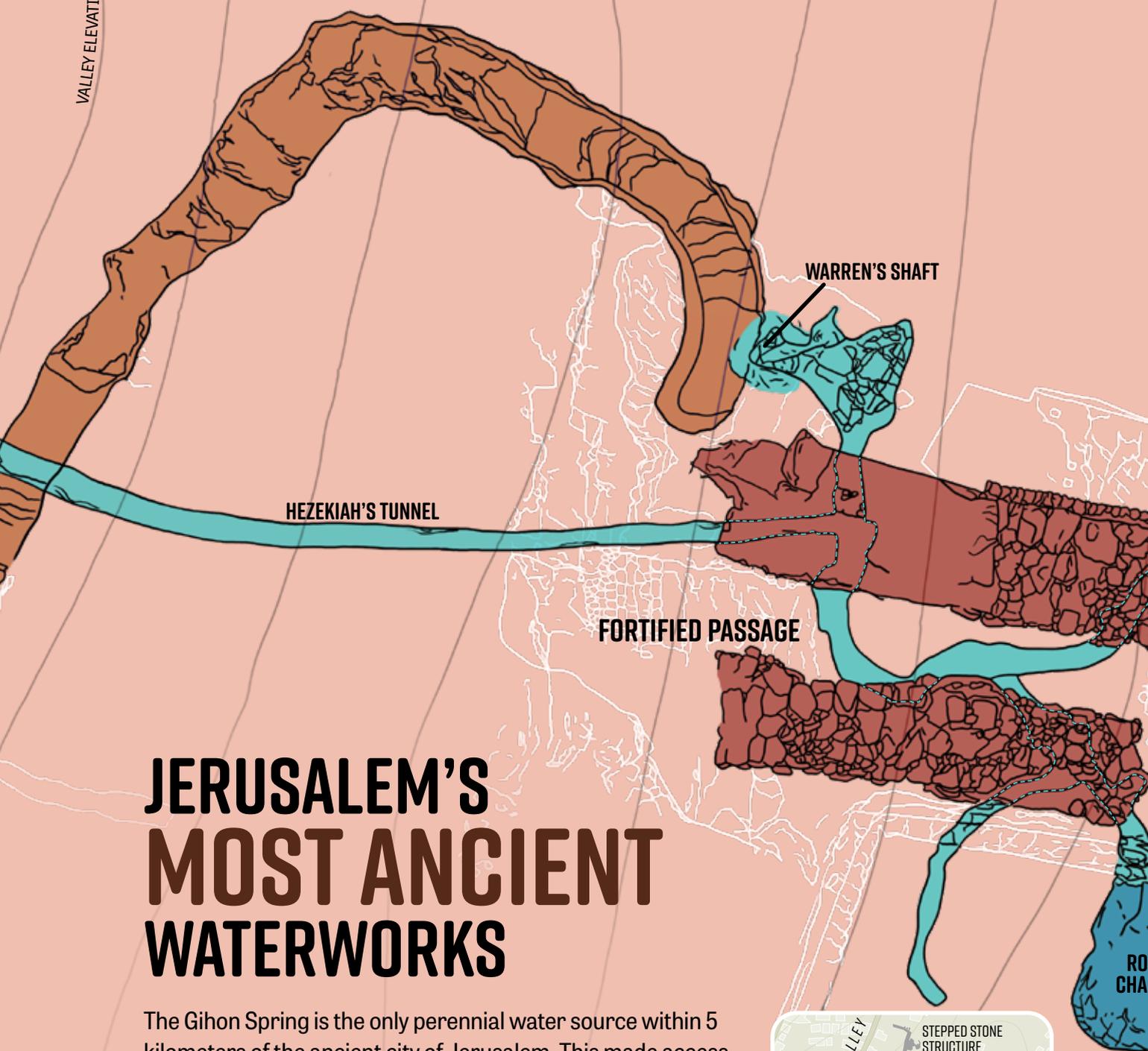
Josephus further recorded that while in Babylon, Abraham “determined to renew and to change the opinion all men happened then to have concerning God; for he was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but one God, the Creator of the universe” (op cit).

Apparently, numerous other texts included a similar refrain, but these have now been lost to history. Josephus wrote that the sixth-century B.C.E. Greek historian Hecataeus not only mentioned Abraham by name, but also composed an entire *book* about the patriarch’s exploits. (Unfortunately, only two fragmentary works from Hecataeus’s many writings have survived to this day.)

Remember what God said about Abram—that he “hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws”? Consider that alongside the information documented by secular historians that Abraham was a highly educated and influential leader in Babylon. Isn’t it logical to believe that Abraham *shared* his knowledge of the biblical laws?

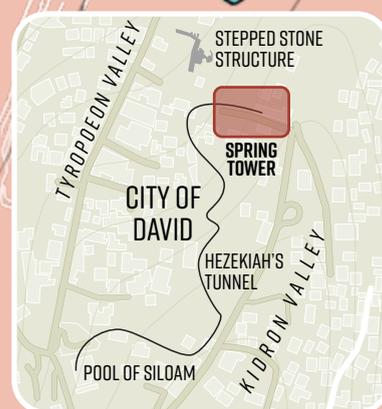
It’s possible that those laws could have reached all the way to King Hammurabi of Babylon.

**HAMMURABI** PAGE 31 ►



# JERUSALEM'S MOST ANCIENT WATERWORKS

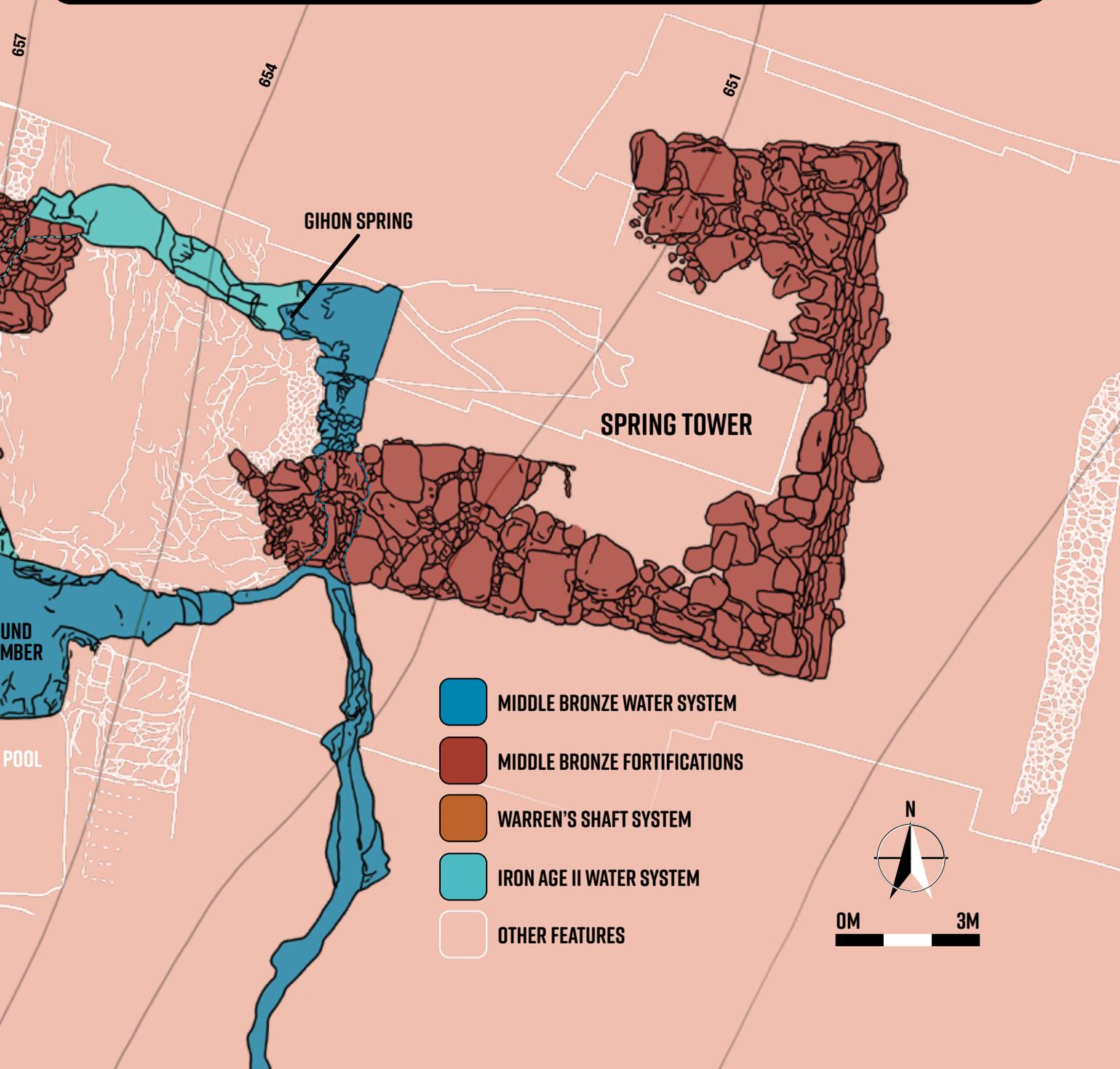
The Gihon Spring is the only perennial water source within 5 kilometers of the ancient city of Jerusalem. This made access to the spring, and protecting the spring from invaders, a critical task for the city's inhabitants. In this map, the original Middle Bronze Age fortification around the spring is overlaid upon a series of tunnels from that period. After Hezekiah's Tunnel was built in the eighth century B.C.E., the Middle Bronze Age round chamber was no longer used for water collection. Instead, some of the water likely collected below Warren's Shaft and the rest flowed to the Siloam Pool in the south of the city.



RO  
CHA  
ROCK-CUT

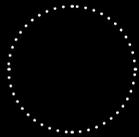
# A BIGGER TUNNEL

The original tunnel floor was cut into the soft *mileke* limestone above Warren's Shaft (a preexisting vertical void in the bedrock). During Iron Age II, the floor of the tunnel was carved to reveal the vertical cavity through which water could be drawn up into the tunnel.



# TOP 10

## BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY DISCOVERIES OF 2022



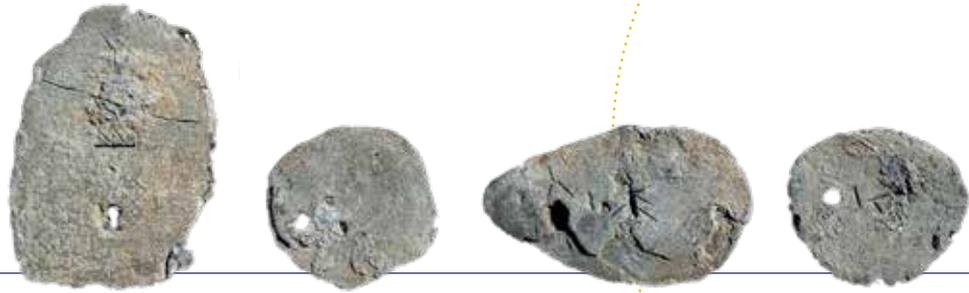
**The frequency with which the land of Israel unveils new archaeological finds supporting the Bible never ceases to amaze. And 2022 was no exception! Here is a list of what we regard as the top 10 finds of 2022. Readers can learn more about each of these sensational artifacts at our website, [ArmstrongInstitute.org](https://ArmstrongInstitute.org).**



**10**

### **RAMESSIDE-ERA TOMB**

In September, the ceiling of a 3,300-year-old underground tomb was unwittingly broken into by construction workers. This surprise discovery was made on Palmahim Beach, a popular beach for tourists and locals. Inside the tomb, archaeologists from the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) found a plethora of artifacts—complete vessels, bronze tools, weapons and skeletons—arranged in the form of a ceremonial burial. This tomb dates to the 13th century B.C.E., the time period of Ramesses II. The fact that the tomb was undisturbed, that it hadn't been looted in antiquity, makes it a gold mine for historians interested in the Late Bronze Age. Perhaps the tomb will shed further light on the chronologically related period of the judges.



9

## JUDGES-ERA LEAD TRADE

Just off the coast of Caesarea, an ancient shipwreck was discovered containing a hoard of lead ingots. In February, Prof. Naama Yahalom-Mack and Prof. Yigal Erel presented their isotope analysis of the ingots, concluding that the lead was mined on the Italian island of Sardinia. The ingots are stamped with Cypriot Minoan markings of the type used during the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.E.). The researchers “concluded that there were vast commercial ties between the two populations with the purpose of transporting

raw material.” This discovery is related to the 2019 discovery of another shipwreck along Israel’s coast that dated to the same period. In this instance, the ingots (tin instead of lead) had been mined in Cornwall, England.

These discoveries fit alongside passages such as Judges 5:17, where the Prophetess Deborah describes the tribes of Dan and Asher as sojourning in ships and occupying seaports. Deuteronomy 33 also describes the tribe of Asher working with “bars” of various metals.

8

## THE ISHMAEL PAPYRUS

The Ishmael Papyrus is a Dead Sea Scroll fragment rediscovered by Prof. Shmuel Ahituv and the IAA in September. The fragment belonged to an anonymous American living in Montana! (The artifact was gifted to him by his mother.) This papyrus is one of only three that have been discovered dating to the First Temple Period, as was determined by carbon dating and the paleo-Hebrew script. The four lines of text on the fragmentary papyrus contain the name “Ishmael,” along with line fragments saying, “don’t send,” “cry after him” and “of no help.” This discovery could be linked to a bulla with the inscription, “Belonging to Ishmael, son of the king.”

Jeremiah 40 describes a man named Ishmael on the scene at the time of Jerusalem’s fall. This man overthrew Gedaliah, the first governor of Judah under Babylon. Jeremiah 40 records that this Ishmael was “of the seed royal,” and from this same eastern location, he attempted to capture and drive a band of Jewish captives into Ammon. It is possible that this papyrus fragment may refer to the same individual.





## 7

### HEZEKIAH'S SLUICE GATE

For decades, scientists have puzzled over how Hezekiah's Tunnel could redirect water from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam without entirely draining the important Upper Pool. In April, researchers Aryeh Shimron, Vitaly Gutkin and Vladimir Uvarov published findings that solved this puzzle by suggesting that water levels

in the tunnel were regulated by a sluice gate—a vertical sliding-door device that regulates the flow of water. Shimron, Gutkin and Uvarov wrote: “We have searched for such a dam at what would be the ideal, perhaps only location for such a structure to be able to function effectively, and have found physical evidence for what may have been a movable blocking wall (sluice) at precisely such a place.” This location within the tunnel has an abnormally high ceiling (necessary for such a gate), with ancient iron bolts sunken into the bedrock walls that bear trace amounts of a petrified-wood frame. They also found a vertical shaft to the surface nearby, helping to explain how the gate was raised and lowered by rope. Water lines within the tunnel suggest that various water levels (much higher than the level today) were sustained for long periods, indicating an artificial means of regulation and continued utilization of the Gihon Spring waters at the source in the Upper Pool, not just all the way down at the bottom of the city, in the Siloam Pool.

The investigation only adds to our knowledge of the engineering brilliance of Hezekiah's Tunnel. The researchers further conclude that Hezekiah's sluice gate would be “to the best of our knowledge, the oldest sluice gate known.”

## 6

### VANILLA-LACED VESSELS FROM TIME OF JEREMIAH

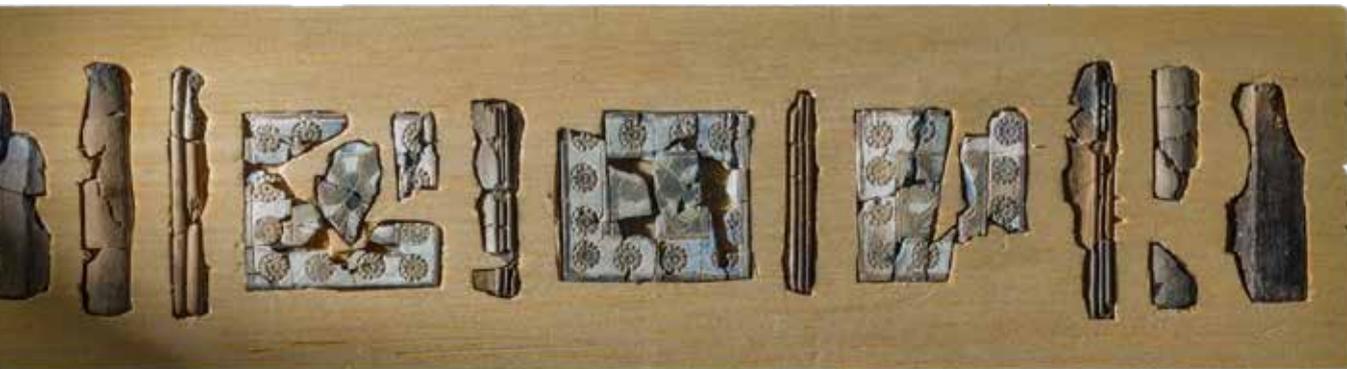
In March, researchers from Tel Aviv University and the IAA published findings from chemical analysis of large storage vessels discovered in the City of David Givati Parking Lot excavations. The vessels dated to the years just before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E.). Analysis of the vessels revealed that the elites of Jerusalem drank wine enriched with vanilla, traces of which were found on the vessels. This discovery was a surprise. Vanilla, according to the press release, “was not at all known to be available to the Old World before the arrival of Columbus.”

The Bible does not mention vanilla directly, but it does refer to spiced wine (Song of Solomon 8:2; Isaiah 49:26). The Prophet

Jeremiah, writing at the same time that these vessels were being used, refers to the glut of wine in the city just prior to its destruction. “... Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Every bottle [jar/vessel] is filled with wine’; and when they shall say unto thee: ‘Do we not know that every bottle is filled with wine?’ Then shalt thou say unto them: Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land ... with drunkenness. And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together,

saith the Lord; I will not pity, nor spare, nor have compassion, that I should not destroy them. Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud .... [T]hou hast forgotten Me ...” (Jeremiah 13:12-15, 25). The discovery of this enormous quantity of smashed wine vessels in this “wine cellar”—in a space, as the archaeologists who found them stated, “so crowded [with wine vessels] that it was hard to understand how people could move inside it”—speaks powerfully to the words contained in the book of Jeremiah.





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## 5

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### CITY OF DAVID IVORIES

In September, Prof. Yuval Gadot and Dr. Yiftah Shalev announced the discovery of about 1,500 fragments of finely decorated ivory, sourced from elephant tusks (a substance considered to be more valuable than gold at the time). This ivory was also found in the City of David Givati Parking Lot excavations. The ivories date to the First Temple Period and show signs of having been crushed and burned in the Babylonian destruction of 586 B.C.E.

This is the first time that such ivories—known from other royal locations, such as those in Assyria, Phoenicia and Samaria—have been discovered in Jerusalem. “We were already

aware of Jerusalem’s importance and centrality in the region in the First Temple Period, but the new finds illustrate how important it was and places it in the same league as the capitals of Assyria and Israel,” wrote Shalev.

Gadot and Shalev suggest that these ivories were “originally inlaid in a couch-throne.” This, too, supports the biblical account of this time period. 1 Kings 10:18 says that Solomon “made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the finest gold.” And in Amos 6:4, the prophet condemns the rich and royal in both Samaria and Zion who “lie upon beds [or, *throne beds*] of ivory.”

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## 4

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### HEZEKIAH’S MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION

In October, archaeologist Eli Shukron and epigrapher Prof. Gershon Galil presented the result of new RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) of a fragmentary stone inscription first discovered in 2007. The two-line, eighth-century B.C.E. inscription, discovered in a refuse heap near a pool connected to Hezekiah’s Tunnel, reads: “[H]zqyh ... [b]rkh,” translated as “[He]zekiah ... [p]ool.”

Galil noted that “this is the first time where a monumental Hebrew text mentions the achievements of a king,” akin to “monumental” inscriptions (stelae) found elsewhere throughout the ancient world. While the fragment itself is rather small (hand-sized), the large lettering indicates it indeed belonged to a significant, monumental-style inscription. Galil and Shukron believe the fragment goes together with another piece uncovered not far away in 1978. This

fragment is inscribed with the word “seventeenth.” The archaeologists believe these inscriptions attest to Hezekiah’s waterworks being constructed in the 17th year of his reign.

2 Kings 20:20 reads: “Now the rest of the acts of *Hezekiah*, and all his might, and *how he made the pool*, and the conduit [Hezekiah’s Tunnel], and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?” Galil posits that such a text may have been copied from an existing monumental inscription.



## 2

### SHILOH TABERNACLE ARCHITECTURE

This past summer, Dr. Scott Stripling and his Associates for Biblical Research team discovered what they believe to be the northern gate entrance to Tel Shiloh, near where the tabernacle likely sat during the period of the judges. “This is important because the high priest, Eli, died in the gate of Shiloh,” Stripling said. “We discovered what we think is the gate mentioned in 1 Samuel 4.” Stripling has made a string of tabernacle-related Late Bronze Age discoveries



## 3

### LACHISH COMB INSCRIPTION

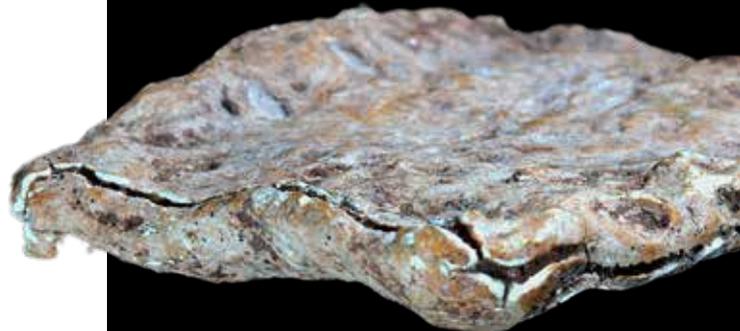
In 2016, a beautiful ivory comb was discovered during excavations at Lachish. It was five years before experts noticed a shallow inscription etched on the comb. In October, it was announced that the inscription had been identified as the earliest-known alphabetic text ever found in Israel. Dated to around 1700 B.C.E., the inscription consists of 17 letters that form seven words: “May this tusk root out the lice of the hai[r and the] beard.”

“This is the first sentence ever found in the Canaanite language in Israel,” said Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, codirector of the Lachish excavations. The comb is a tremendous discovery because it demonstrates that there was an active alphabetic Semitic language in place prior to the time the Bible states that the Torah was written. The sentence grammar also corroborates a certain grammatical usage found in the Bible—one that had previously been believed to be a marker of late authorship (see [ArmstrongInstitute.org/783](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/783)).

## 1

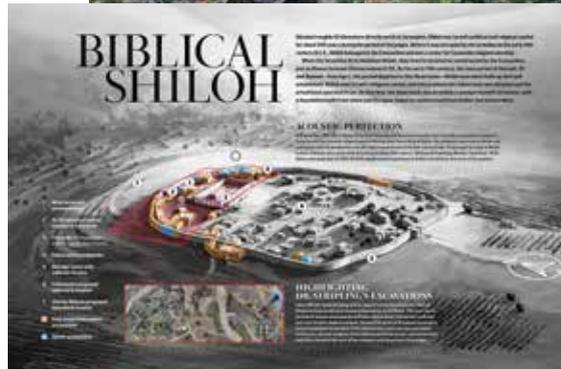
### MT. EBAL CURSE TABLET

The Mount Ebal curse tablet has been touted as one of the most important discoveries in the history of biblical archaeology. This lead *defixio* (curse tablet) was unearthed in 2019 at the Late Bronze Age site of Joshua’s altar on Mount Ebal. The translation of the text inside was released in March and reveals an ancient text “centuries older than any known Hebrew inscription from ancient Israel.”



## TECTURE

at Tel Shiloh, including the horns of an altar, sacrificial animal bones and ceramic pomegranates (e.g. Exodus 27:2; 28:34). Further, during this year's season, Stripling's team has unearthed a foundation whose size and orientation aligns with biblical details of the tabernacle, along with storage rooms (likely for tithes) surrounding the tabernacle foundation. "All of this together inductively suggests to us that we are seeing what is found in the Bible," wrote Stripling.



See our infographic on Shiloh at [ArmstrongInstitute.org/720](https://ArmstrongInstitute.org/720)

The tablet reads: "Cursed, cursed, cursed—cursed by the God YHW; You will die cursed; Cursed you will surely die; Cursed by YHW—cursed, cursed, cursed."

One of the most notable elements about the tablet is that it mentions a form of the tetragrammaton name of God, YHWH (Yahweh), in conjunction with another form of the name, El. The use of these two names together for the *same deity* disproves a key foundational component of the minimalist Documentary Hypothesis. Minimalists argue that the Bible was a compilation of writings from later periods by different

pagan authors who worshiped two different gods, *Yahweh* and *El/Elohim*.

The tablet, even more notably, illustrates the "curse" ceremony that took place at the Mount Ebal altar at the time of the Israelite conquest. This event is recorded in detail in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt set the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. ... Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord, the God of Israel in mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded ..." (Deuteronomy 11:29; Joshua 8:30-31).

These are just a handful of the impressive discoveries made this year in the world of biblical archaeology. Others include the discovery of nearly 1,000 fossilized parasite eggs beneath a 2,700-year-old palatial toilet at Armon HaNatziv, including pork tapeworm (paralleling the contemporaneous passage in Isaiah 65:4 condemning the consumption of such at that time); a Davidic and Hasmonean-era farming village at a site called Horvat Assad, within the tribal area of Naphtali (a region 1 Chronicles 12:41 notes as supplying produce to David "in abundance"); new evidence of the widespread tattooing of Egyptian women and prostitutes (compare with Leviticus 19:28-29); and new evidence that the ancient Egyptians brutally branded their slaves.

Overall, this has been a fascinating and enlightening year for biblical archaeology. What will 2023 unveil? ■



# Uncovering Ancient Shechem

The biblical record has a lot to say about the ancient city of Shechem—and so does archaeology.

BY SAMUEL MCKOY

**S**ITUATED IN THE CENTER OF ISRAEL, THE CITY OF Nablus has been famous for its exotic soap for more than 1,000 years. Nablusi soap is manufactured from virgin olive oil, water and a sodium extract from the Barilla plant, and it was once exported across the Arab world and Europe.

But soap is not the only ancient gem in the city. Situated 2.5 kilometers east of central Nablus, nestled inconspicuously among shops, markets and garages, the Tel Balata Archaeological Park contains the ruins of one of biblical Israel's earliest and most important cities.

Tel Balata is the Arabic name for the ancient city of Shechem (שֶׁכֶם). Situated some 50 kilometers (30 miles) directly north of Jerusalem, Shechem is mentioned 60 times in the Bible. This city was the location of numerous biblical events, including Abraham's first campsite in Canaan, Simeon and Levi's attack on the city, Joshua's construction of an altar, Abimelech's wicked judgeship, Jeroboam's early reign, and Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman.

Shechem is situated in the narrow valley separating Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, two of the largest mountains in Samaria. This valley was a principal highway for merchants and travelers moving between northern and southern Israel. Shechem's situation on this crucial trade artery gave it prominence.

The city also had an abundance of water, thanks to numerous natural springs and a high, stable water table, which made digging new wells easy. The most famous of these is Jacob's Well, mentioned in John's gospel account and situated just a few hundred yards east of Shechem. Between the plentiful supply of water and abundance of fertile valley soils, the land around Shechem was ideal for sustaining livestock and growing food (Genesis 37:12-14). The city's strategic situation and physical wealth made it, in the words of Prof. Baruch Halpern, the "natural seat of government for the region north of Jerusalem" (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*).

The Bible has much to say about Shechem. But what does archaeology tell us?



### Abraham's Shechem

Shechem features prominently in the biblical account of the patriarchs. Genesis 12 records that when Abram first arrived in Canaan, sometime in the late 20th century B.C.E., he “passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the terebinth [tree] of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land” (verse 6). Shechem was a Canaanite city at this time. Its abundant water supply and lush

fields provided sustenance for Abram’s livestock and large entourage.

We don’t know exactly how long Abram stayed in Shechem, but the Bible records that the patriarchs had an obvious affection for the city and region. In Shechem, God expounded on His promises to Abram. In verse 7, God told Abram, “Unto thy seed will I give this land.” The patriarch showed his gratitude by building an altar to God, the first-recorded altar built by Abram in Canaan.

The city of Shechem is featured some decades later, when Abraham’s grandson Jacob returns from Northern Mesopotamia to settle in Canaan. Genesis 33 says that Jacob purchased land from Hamor, the king of Shechem, and lived in peace with the community. In chapter 34, Jacob’s peaceful coexistence with the people of Shechem ends following an incident between his daughter Dinah and “Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land” (verse 2). Shechem fornicated with Dinah, became infatuated with her, and asked Jacob for her hand in marriage. Simeon and Levi,

Dinah’s brothers, promised their sister to Shechem, but only if the men of Shechem (the city) agreed to be circumcised. Hamor and Shechem agreed to the terms and subjected their men to the procedure. But it was all a ruse. Simeon and Levi took advantage of the incapacitated men and invaded Shechem.

This harrowing incident marred relations between Jacob’s family and the people of Shechem. “Ye have troubled me,” Jacob said, in a rebuke of his sons, “to make me odious unto the inhabitants of the land ...” (verse 30). Jacob and his family were forced to relocate to Bethel. Before leaving, however, Jacob purged his household of pagan idols—burying them under the terebinth tree of Shechem.

Jacob and his family moved away but continued to farm their land in Shechem. Genesis 37 records the account of Joseph being sent to check on his half-brothers, who were in Shechem. Young Joseph was near this location when he was sold by his brothers into slavery. Nearly three centuries later, Joseph’s preserved body would return to Canaan with the Israelites and be buried in Shechem (Joshua 24:32).

The ruins of this ancient city were first exposed in 1903 by German historian Hermann Thiersch. Following an intuition that Tel Balata was Shechem, Thiersch uncovered on the west side of the tel “a piece of ‘cyclopean’ wall.” After discovering these ruins, Thiersch wrote, “All historical conditions are satisfied completely by this point.” Based on the wall and the



Hermann Thiersch



Ernst Sellin

position of the tel, Thiersch determined that the site was none other than Shechem. Thiersch uncovered little of the site himself, but his conclusion spurred subsequent excavations by German archaeologist Ernst Sellin in 1913 and 1914, and then again from 1926 to 1936. Sellin's archaeological reports are few—in part, due to his Berlin home being bombed in 1943—and what is left is not well organized, to the point where “one can do very little with his reports” (*Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City*, George E. Wright). Nonetheless, Sellin uncovered much of the city's fortifications and the foundation of a huge temple. Sellin also discovered a few Israelite and Canaanite artifacts, which reinforced the conclusion that the site was Shechem.

In 1956, American archaeologists George E. Wright and Bernhard Anderson continued excavations at Shechem. Together, they uncovered destruction layers from the eighth and second centuries B.C.E. They also uncovered a Canaanite *glacis* (earthen embankment), which led up to the city's walls and dated to the 17th century B.C.E. Wright directed excavations at the site until 1962. Shechem was again excavated in 1973, this time by the famous American archaeologist Prof. William Dever. Future excavations are planned between Palestinian archaeologists and the University of Leiden, funded by the Dutch government.

Uncovered by Wright, the earliest structures at Shechem have been dated to the Middle Bronze Period, around 1850 to 1750 B.C.E. The exposure of a silo, several small walls, and a few streets from this period indicate Shechem was established as a built-up urban center at the time.

Further archaeological discoveries from the Middle Bronze Age confirm this. In 1901, John Garstang discovered the Stela of Khu-sobek (a military adviser

to Sesostri III) outside of Khu-sobek's tomb in Abydos, Egypt. Khu-sobek wrote this inscription between 1880 and 1840 B.C.E. The inscription mentions a district named “Sekmem,” where Sesostri III fought with “Asiatics” (a standard Egyptian name for peoples of the Levant). Archaeologists believe Sekmem is a reference to Shechem.

In the 1920s, French Egyptologist Georges Posener uncovered an Egyptian inscription devoted to a ruler named “Ibish-Hadad of Shechem.” This inscription was found on an execration (curse) tablet, which dates to the mid-19th century B.C.E. and was found

in Saqqara, Egypt. These mentions of Shechem from the patriarchal period indicate its significance in the Canaanite period.

Shechem was further fortified around 1750 B.C.E. when a double defensive wall was constructed. By 1700, this massive wall had been bolstered by an earthen embankment. Wright wrote that “the city was provided in the Bronze Age with perhaps the most massive city fortification ever found in the country” (“The First Campaign at Tell Balata”).

Over time, Shechem's fortifications continued to be strengthened with the addition of further large wall and gate structures. The city had at least two gates: one in the northwest and one in the east. A southern courtyard temple and surrounding buildings were covered with dirt, and a larger temple was constructed on top of this dirt pad.

It appears that around 1550 B.C.E., Shechem was destroyed by Pharaoh Ahmose and his invading Egyptian army. Destruction layers from Ahmose's campaign are spread throughout Canaan. Wright dated a destruction layer at Shechem to between 1570 and 1545 B.C.E. Though ancient sources mention Megiddo's destruction by Ahmose, no source mentions the destruction of Shechem. Following its destruction, the city lay dormant for about 100 years.

In his article “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine: The Middle Bronze Age—The Zenith of the Urban Canaanite Era,” Professor Dever described Middle Bronze Age Shechem: “They put up enormous earthen embankments that were surrounded by massive walls, thus transforming a low, vulnerable rise in the pass into a seemingly impregnable fortress. ...

“[T]here is evidence that town planning was highly centralized and sophisticated. Greater Canaan was no backwater.”

Evidence suggests the mid-15th century B.C.E. marked a new growth period for Shechem. This is when the great fortifications and the southern temple were rebuilt (likely the temple of Baal-Berith mentioned in this location in Judges 9:4, 46). The largest massebah (or “standing stone”) discovered in Israel was unearthed near the altar of this temple. This renaissance in Shechem appears to have been underway around the time of Israel’s conquest of Canaan.

## Period of the Conquest

Interestingly, the book of Joshua does not mention the conquest of Shechem, but it does record a number of events occurring in the region. Joshua 8, for example, records Joshua building an altar on Mount Ebal and the Israelites gathering on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim to perform in a giant outdoor musical festival that reiterated God’s promises of blessings or curses (Deuteronomy 11:26-29 and Joshua 8:30-35). And Joshua 24 recounts Joshua taking all of the tribes of Israel to Shechem, where they made a covenant with God. Yet the Bible does not mention anything about the conquest or capture of this city. Why not?

Some scholars believe Shechem remained a Canaanite stronghold. Historian Hanoch Reviv, in an article titled “The Government of Shechem in the El-Amarna Period and in the Days of Abimelech,” wrote that Shechem would “endure as a foreign enclave in the heart of the Israelite settlement.” This begs the question: Why would the Israelites renew their covenant and bury Joseph in a Canaanite city? Joshua 20:7 declares Shechem as one of the six Levitical cities, indicating that it must have been controlled by Israel. What does archaeology suggest happened to Shechem in this period?

The 14th-century B.C.E. Amarna letters—letters from Canaanite leaders to Egypt’s pharaoh, written around the time of Israel’s conquest—may give insight. A king named Labayu of Shechem wrote several of the tablets found at Amarna (EA 252-254). On EA 252, King Labayu defends his *inaction* against an invading people he identifies as the *Habiru*. On EA 254, Labayu defends himself against accusations of treason and rebellion before Amenhotep III. On the relationship between Canaan and Egypt at that time, historian S. Douglas Waterhouse wrote: “As in Joshua’s Canaan, the Amarna texts speak of independent city-states who possess the freedom to form their own alliances and pursue their own local agendas (though they owed nominal allegiance to Egypt)”

(“Who Are the Habiru of the Amarna Letters?”).

What was really going on? Why didn’t King Labayu resist the invading *Habiru* army? Written by Abdi-Heba, the ruler of Jerusalem, Amarna letter EA 289 answers. In this letter, Abdi-Heba demands that the pharaoh send him men as a defensive measure to protect Jerusalem. In describing “all the lands” and towns of Canaan falling to the *Habiru*, he says, “Are we to act like Labayu WHEN HE WAS GIVING THE LAND OF SHECHEM TO THE HABIRU?”

This evidence suggests that the Canaanite King Labayu, rather than fight the Hebrews when they invaded the region, surrendered in some sort of agreement. Waterhouse suggests that Israel requisitioned Shechem peacefully.

The archaeology at Tel Balata supports this proposition. “In parallel agreement, the archaeological evidence

indicates that the Late Bronze city once ruled by Labayu and his sons never suffered a destruction,” wrote Waterhouse, “*but rather experienced a peaceful transition from Labayu’s time to the later Iron Age*” (emphasis added).

The Bible does not mention Labayu, perhaps for a good reason. Amarna letters EA 245 and EA 250 show that not long after Labayu surrendered Shechem, and after he made treaties with Gezer and Gath-Carmel, he was killed in mysterious

circumstances during his journey to Egypt to give an account of his actions.

With Labayu dead and Shechem firmly in Israelite hands, Joshua allotted it to the tribe of Manasseh (Joshua 17:17-18). The city, which became one of six refuge cities, remained a large and influential city in the region (Joshua 20:7-9).

## Judges Period

Shechem features prominently in the account of Abimelech, an illegitimate son of Gideon and a Shechemite woman, leading an uprising in the region. Eventually, Abimelech slaughtered the men of Shechem, razed the city, and then “salted” the ground. (Salting an area was a practice of Baal-worshippers to purify a place of unclean spirits, as attested to by an article in *Vetus Testamentum Vol. 3*, “The Salting of Shechem,” by A. M. Honeymoon.)

Abimelech reigned in Shechem not as a judge but as king. During his reign, he secured sovereignty over much of Ephraim and Manasseh. Judges 9:6 shows Abimelech was crowned upon the massebah, or standing stone, and verse 4 shows that it was the wealth of the temple



The standing stone at Tel Balata

of Baal-Berith that funded Abimelech's mercenary army. For three years, Abimelech reigned over much of Israel (verse 22)—thanks largely to the city's crucial strategic situation at the center of Israel.

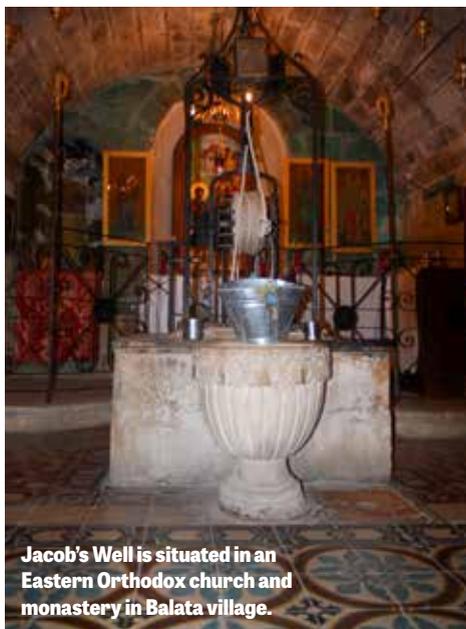
The archaeological record corroborates the story of Abimelech and his destruction of Shechem. Baruch Halpern, in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, wrote, "[T]he archaeological record at Shechem dovetails nicely with the story: The site was apparently abandoned after a destruction in the mid-12th century B.C.E." This fits with the general biblical chronological setting for this event in the time period of the judges. Though the entire city was not razed, verses 46-49 specifically mention Abimelech burning Shechem's temple. Wright's excavations discovered signs of burning within the cella (inner chamber) of this temple ("The Excavation of Shechem and the Biblical Tradition," by Edward Campbell and James Ross).

Shechem's history did not end with its destruction by Abimelech. Thanks to its dominant geography, it quickly became powerful again. "Shechem must have quickly risen from its ruins," wrote Siegfried Horn, "for its later history indicates that it had lost little, if any, of its importance" ("Shechem in the Light of Archaeological Evidence").

## Monarchic Period

Shechem was a prominent city during the period of the united monarchy. 1 Kings 12:1 records that following the death of his father, Solomon, "Rehoboam went to Shechem; for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king." The city was important to the northern tribes of Israel, which is why Rehoboam visited. However, it showed that the northern tribes were clinging to the history in their own lands rather than traveling south to Jerusalem. Shechem was a city that was meaningful to Israel long before David chose Jerusalem. Therefore, it is fitting that from Shechem, Israel would deliver Rehoboam an ultimatum and rebel against the "house of David" (verse 19). Israel had once made a covenant in Shechem to follow God (Joshua 24). Now, they were making a covenant here again to follow Jeroboam.

1 Kings 12:25 reaffirms the importance of this city: "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill-country of



Jacob's Well is situated in an Eastern Orthodox church and monastery in Balata village.

Ephraim, and dwelt therein ...." In an article titled "Jeroboam and Shechem," historian and linguist Dr. Nigel Allan wrote: "Jeroboam's choice of Shechem for his capital seems an obvious one as it had been the historic capital of the Joseph tribes during the period of judges."

However, Jeroboam's stay in this location was short-lived. Allan believes this was because it was a Levitical city. For a breakaway king seeking to establish his own religion, a city full of priests was not an ideal environment. "The new regime was established in a new place free from administrative and religious

interference, while the spiritual focal point having been removed from Jerusalem did not return to its former location at Shechem but was sited in the ancient shrines of Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:29), neither of which are recorded as having contained Levitical settlements," Allan wrote.

Jeroboam's brief stint in Shechem is also corroborated by archaeology. In an article titled "The Stratification of Tell Balatah (Shechem)," an archaeologist who excavated at Tel Balata, Lawrence Toombs, wrote: "The fortunes of the city improved dramatically when Jeroboam I rebuilt its walls, and made it briefly the capital of the northern kingdom ...." The 1956-1957 excavations at the east gate of the city showed that walls were patched and reinforced around 920 B.C.E. A probe below stones atop the northwestern gate showed similar signs of renewal. The Bible records that Rehoboam sought to attack Jeroboam (2 Chronicles 11), so it makes sense that the northern king would bolster the defenses of his capital. Several buildings also replaced their earthen floors with flagstone floors during this period, perhaps indicating an influx of wealth or prestige. This growth period did not last long though.

The Prophet Hosea indicates that Shechem became a city filled with crime during the period of the Israelite monarchy. While describing the sins of Israel and Judah, Hosea wrote, "And as troops of robbers wait for a man, So doth the company of priests; They murder in the way toward Shechem ..." (Hosea 6:9). Shechem was a vital city for traders and those seeking refuge. As a refuge city, Shechem's function was to

protect the citizens of Israel so that the Levites could administer the law; instead, it became a city of crime, corruption and vice.

## Shechem Since

Little is known of Israelite Shechem following the reign of Jeroboam. The city was destroyed in 724 B.C.E. by Shalmaneser v of Assyria. In an article titled “Three Campaigns at Biblical Shechem,” James Ross and Lawrence Toombs wrote, “The city was virtually abandoned from the time of his invasion until the fourth century (B.C.E.).” The city became inhabited by Samaritans and was eventually partially destroyed by locals, the Ptolemies, the Seleucids and the Maccabees on different occasions. John Hyrcanus captured the city around 128 B.C.E. and destroyed its temples. His sons, Aristobulus and Antigonus, devastated Shechem and sold its inhabitants into slavery at the end of the second century B.C.E.

The area of Shechem is mentioned a few times in the New Testament. In Acts 7:16, Stephen alludes to “Sychem” being the burial location of Jacob and Joseph. John 4:5 describes Jesus traveling through the region of Samaria to an area “which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph” (King James Version). Verse 6 records Jesus interacting with a Samaritan woman while resting at “Jacob’s well.” Since the fourth century C.E., Jacob’s Well—which is situated a short distance from Tel Balata—has been a popular site for Christian pilgrims.

In verse 12, the Samaritan woman refers to Jacob as “our father.” The Samaritans claim to be descendants of Abraham and revere Shechem for its patriarchal history. Archaeological evidence uncovered on Mount Gerizim show that the Samaritans built places of worship and considered it a holy site. Even today, a small group of Samaritans continue to have worship services on Mount Gerizim. And the Samaritans’ second-most holy site is Joseph’s tomb, which is also in Shechem’s vicinity (though the exact location is disputed).

In the Roman period, a new city arose 3 miles west of the ruins of Shechem. It was named Flavia Neapolis by Emperor Vespasian in 72 C.E. In the seventh century C.E., Muslims conquered the city and changed its name to Nablus. Another small village arose on the ruins of Shechem called Balata.

Today, these sites are part of Area A of the West Bank. Nablus is an unstable city, home to a relatively new terrorist group called the Lion’s Den. These militants are cross-factional young Palestinians hoping to cast off Israeli rule. This turmoil will make future excavations at Tel Balata jeopardous.

But it also speaks to the prophetic repetition of history in this storied location. ■

► **HAMMURABI** FROM PAGE 17

## Transformation of ‘Sin City’?

Babylon is synonymous with sin in the Bible. Its founder, Nimrod, built it in direct rebellion against God (Genesis 10:10; 11:1-9). When you study the Code of Hammurabi, however, it reveals a formidable Babylonian state that, at least for a certain period of time, observed laws that appear similar to those credited in the Bible as being divinely inspired.

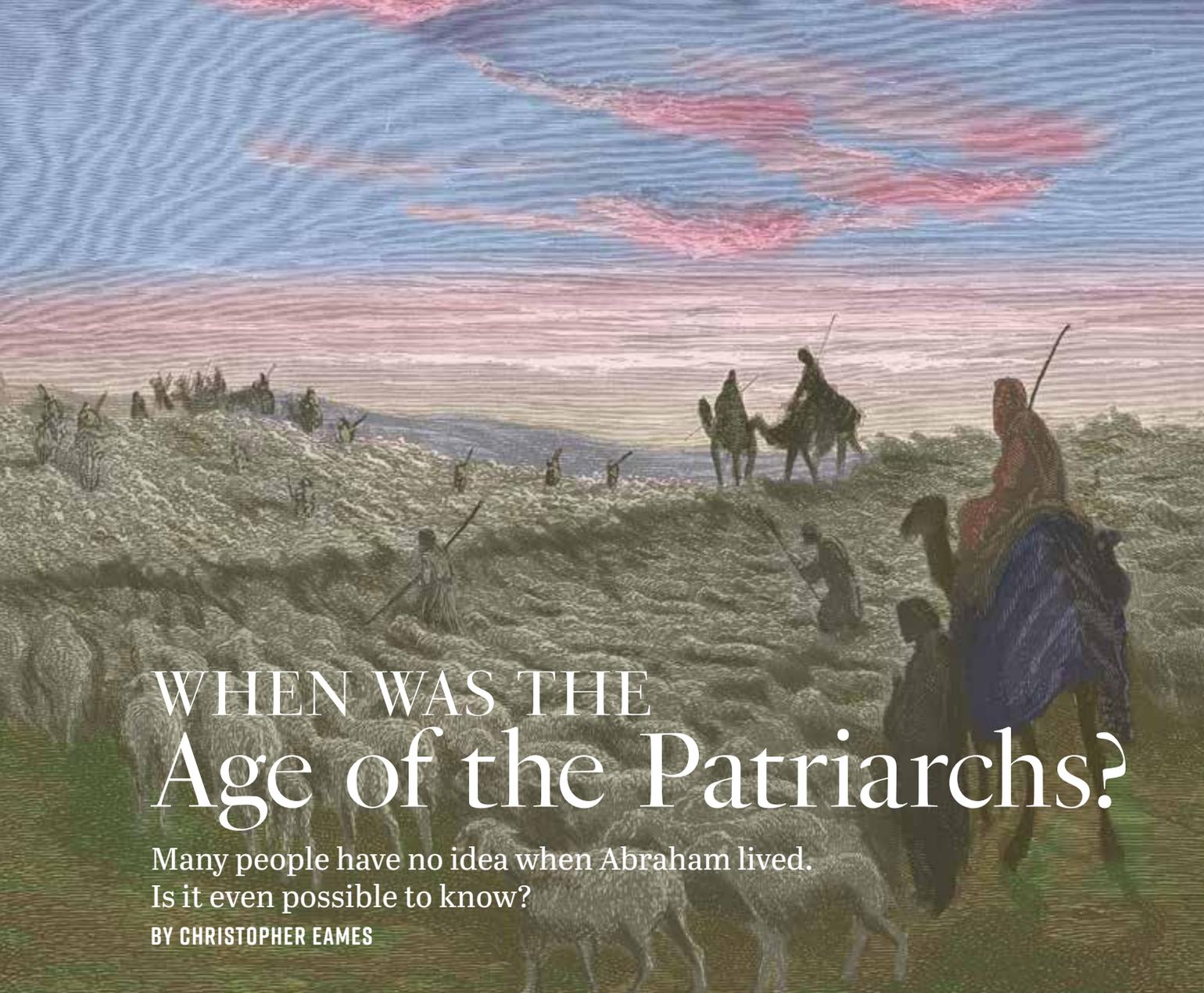
In Deuteronomy 4, God says that He gave Israel His laws for a specific reason: to point to Him and His limitless wisdom. “Observe therefore and do them [God’s laws]; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that, when they hear all these statutes, shall say: ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there, that hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is whensoever we call upon Him? And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (verses 6-8). God wanted Israel’s legal system to be an example to the neighboring nations and to ultimately point these people to Israel’s God.

Genesis 26:5 shows that Abraham kept God’s laws. And the classical accounts tell us that Abraham evidently did not hide his obedience from prying eyes; in fact, he shared his knowledge with the people of Babylon. Though he by no means “converted” the people of Babylon, *could it be possible* that Abraham’s righteous example actually brought *Babylon*, of all places, closer to God’s biblical standard? Did he play a role in the composition of the Code of Hammurabi? Again, *is it just coincidence* that such similar laws appear *from the same time period and place* as the “mighty prince” and patriarch, Abraham?

One final scripture to this end. The following prophecy given to Abraham foretells the Israelite conquest of certain peoples within Canaan—and that such a conquest would be *delayed* several generations, on account of one tribe: those same people to which Abraham was “confederate” and to which Hammurabi was associated.

“And He said unto Abram: ‘Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs [Egypt], and shall serve them .... And in the fourth generation they shall come back hither; *for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full*’ (Genesis 15:13, 16). This primarily refers to *Canaan*. But remember that *Babylon* too, at this time, was governed by an Amorite dynasty (including Hammurabi).

Why was the “iniquity” of the Amorites “not yet full,” as with the other surrounding peoples? *Could it be because they were adhering, in some form or other, to a degree of “righteous” laws—to that famous Babylonian Amorite text, the Code of Hammurabi?* ■



# WHEN WAS THE Age of the Patriarchs?

Many people have no idea when Abraham lived. Is it even possible to know?

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

**W**HEN, EXACTLY, DID ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB live? It's a hotly debated topic. It's also an important topic in the field of biblical archaeology. The Bible contains significant and rich detail about these figures and their cultural and geopolitical surroundings. But to understand the biblical account and compare it with material evidence uncovered in excavation, we need a chronological framework.

Can we know exactly when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived?

## Solomon to the Exodus

When calculating biblical dates, it's always best to start with known facts. Perhaps the most widely accepted date among experts is the date for the construction of the temple by King Solomon. 1 Kings 6:1 records that this project began during the fourth year

of Solomon's reign. And a general consensus among archaeologists, Bible scholars and chronologists is that this was 967 B.C.E.

The reason most agree on this date is due to the unique harmony of biblical regnal chronologies, Assyrian inscriptions and Classical sources, particularly highlighted by the exhaustive work of 20th-century scholars Edwin Thiele and Valerius Couke. Despite being completely unaware of one another's work, and using entirely different and unrelated methods of calculation, both men arrived at exactly the same lynchpin date for the beginning of the construction of Solomon's temple. (For more information, read our article on the subject at [ArmstrongInstitute.org/685](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/685).)

As one would expect, there are other suggested dates for the construction of Solomon's temple. In this article,



however, we will use the most commonly accepted date of 967 B.C.E.

The reason this date is helpful is because 1 Kings 6:1 explicitly connects the construction of Solomon's temple to the Exodus. This allows us to calculate another *much earlier* specific date. 1 Kings 6:1 reads: "And it came to pass *in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt*, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord."

The math is simple. By adding 480 years to 967 B.C.E., we arrive at an Exodus date of 1447 B.C.E. (or more specifically, 1446 B.C.E., as the temple's construction began "in the four hundred and eightieth year"). More generally, if we add 480 years to the early 10th century B.C.E. (the time of David and Solomon) we can conclude that the Exodus occurred in the mid-15th century B.C.E.

While the logic here seems simple, there is enormous debate over the date of the Exodus. There are two primary positions. First, there are the "early Exodus" proponents. This side takes the Bible literally and, using passages like 1 Kings 6:1, Judges 11:26 and 1 Chronicles 5-6, believes that the Exodus indeed occurred in the mid-15th century B.C.E. Then there are the "late Exodus" proponents. This side generally believes the Exodus occurred in the 13th century B.C.E., about 200 years later. This theory is primarily anchored in Exodus 1:11, where the place-name "Raamses" is mentioned. This reference is generally interpreted as referring to one of the pharaohs named Ramesses (who only came on the scene during the 13th century B.C.E.).

In order to hold to this late-Exodus theory, the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 is dismissed as merely a "symbolic" number. Proponents of the "late Exodus" also dismiss the judge Jephthah's statement in Judges 11:26, where he says Israel had inhabited Canaan (to that point) for 300 years. Finally, "late Exodus" proponents also dismiss the extremely long generations spanning the judges period, documented in 1 Chronicles 5-6.

While dating the Exodus to the 13th century B.C.E. is reasonably popular, this requires an *outright rejection* of numerous biblical verses, essentially *undermining* the accuracy of the biblical text. And while Ramesses II is often identified in pop culture as the pharaoh of the Exodus based on Exodus 1:11, this too requires the dismissal of biblical text—specifically Exodus 2:23, which says that the pharaoh of Exodus 1:11 had *died* long before Moses was called by God to free the Israelites. How can one establish an honest biblical chronology while simultaneously rejecting the biblical record?

The geographic use of "Raamses" in Exodus 1:11 can easily be explained as a later scribal *anachronism* (a later, more familiar territorial name replacing an earlier, less familiar name for clarity; for example, using the modern name "France" to refer to ancient Gaul). We already *know* Raamses was a title used anachronistically in the Bible—after all, the *same territorial name is used in Genesis 47:11*, at the time of *Jacob*. Does that mean the patriarch *Jacob* should be placed in the 13th century B.C.E.? Of course not. (For a much more detailed examination of this Exodus debate, read our articles at [ArmstrongInstitute.org/350/762](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/350/), [/772](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/350/772) and [/767](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/350/767).)

For these reasons, we will use the mid-15th-century B.C.E. date for the Exodus to determine the time period of the patriarchs.

## The Long Sojourn

Using 1446 B.C.E. as the date of the Exodus, we can calculate the time of the patriarchs. Exodus 12:40 provides key information, specifically in relation to the duration of Israel's sojourn in Egypt: "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was *four hundred and thirty years*."

Proponents of what is known as the "long sojourn" believe these 430 years refer to the time period beginning with Jacob's entrance into Egypt and up to the Exodus. Thus, when we add 430 years to 1446 B.C.E., we arrive at 1876 B.C.E., or the early 19th century. To "long sojourn" advocates, this is the date for the arrival of Jacob and his family in Egypt (sometimes referred to as the "Eisodus").

From here, calculating Abraham's birth, his relocation to Canaan, the birth of Isaac and the Eisodus is fairly straightforward. The book of Genesis records a number of timestamps, including several that identify Abraham's age at certain key points in his life, as well as ages for Isaac, Jacob and even Joseph. These accounts reveal a 215-year time frame from the Eisodus back to Abraham's calling at the age of 75, recorded in Genesis 12.

According to the long-sojourn theory, which pivots on Exodus 12:40 and the *apparent* confirmation that the Israelites lived in Egypt for 430 years, Abraham was born in 2166 B.C.E. and called by God in circa 2091—thus beginning the age of the patriarchs in the late third millennium B.C.E.

But there is another, more prominent theory about Israel's sojourn—one that puts the patriarchal period *after* the turn of the millennium.

## The Short Sojourn

The *short* sojourn places all of the patriarchs within the first half of the *second* millennium B.C.E. This is the standard interpretation of the related chronological

scriptures in Judaism. Ironically, some of the strongest scriptural support for this chronology comes from the *New Testament*.

Exodus 12:40, which mentions the “430 years,” is not the only verse with a chronological bearing on the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. The other primary passage is Genesis 15, where God reveals to Abraham (then called Abram) what will happen to his descendants. “And He said unto Abram: ‘Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years’” (Genesis 15:13).

Exodus mentions 430 years; Genesis says 400. Is this a contradiction? The long-sojourn position holds that the 400 years is referring to the same 430 years mentioned in Exodus, and that the number has simply been rounded down. But there is more to it than this.

Notice the following verses in Genesis 15: “And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance [the Exodus]. But thou [Abraham] shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. *And in the FOURTH GENERATION they shall come back hither*; for the iniquity of the Amorite [a certain population in Canaan] is not yet full” (verses 14-16).

These verses are crucial: The Bible says Abraham’s descendants would be *four generations* in Egypt, and then they would return to Canaan. A study of the Exodus genealogies reveals exactly this *four generations* of Israelites in Egypt.

Numbers 26:58-59, for example, list the families of

Levi, and state that Levi’s son “*Kohath begot Amram. And [his wife] bore unto Amram Aaron and Moses ....*” So from the descent of Levi into Egypt to the Exodus, we have *four generations* to Moses and Aaron.

Numbers 16 lists the genealogy of rebellious Korah. Verse 1 mentions “*Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi.*” The men of the tribe of Reuben who assisted Korah in his rebellion are listed as *Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Pallu, the son of Reuben* (Numbers 26:5-9; Exodus 6:14). In both cases, four generations are listed.

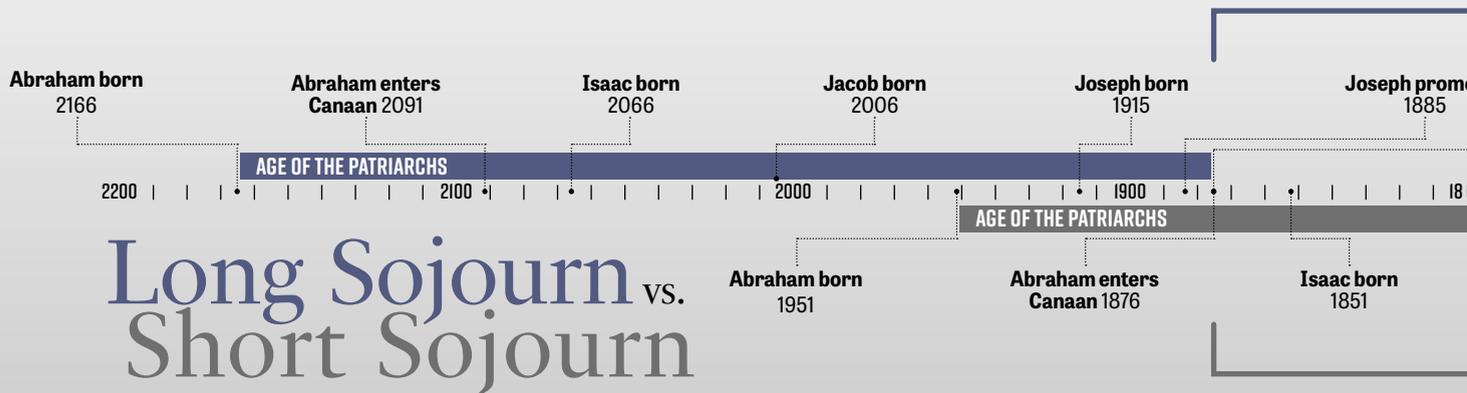
The same goes for cursed Achan mentioned in Joshua 7. He was a *son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, the son of Judah* (Joshua 7:1; 1 Chronicles 2:3-7). The list goes on (e.g. 1 Chronicles 2:9; Ruth 4:18-20). All these examples corroborate the statement found in Genesis 15:16: “[I]n the fourth generation they shall come back hither.”

If *only* four generations of Israelites sojourned in Egypt, then the sojourn must have been a lot shorter than 430 years. Proponents of the “short sojourn” believe the period between Jacob’s arrival in Egypt and the Exodus was about 210 to 215 years. But this raises the question: What about the 400- and 430-year periods clearly recorded in Genesis 15:13 and Exodus 12:40? How to explain this?

### Judaism Answers, Christianity Corroborates

Genesis 15:13 reads: “And He said unto Abram: ‘Know of a surety that *THY SEED* shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict

## The Bible says Abraham’s descendants would be four generations in Egypt, and then they would return to Canaan.



# Long Sojourn vs. Short Sojourn

them four hundred years.” The standard interpretation of this verse in Judaism is that this 400-year period began with Abraham’s *literal seed*, Isaac.

In his article “How Long Was the Sojourn in Egypt: 210 or 430 Years?”, David Gadeloff explained: “[R]abbinic tradition, as cited by Rashi [a medieval rabbi and one of Judaism’s most highly respected commentators], is as follows: The covenant between the parts (Genesis 15:7-21) took place 430 years before the Exodus, and that is the period referred to in our verse. At that time, God told Abraham that his offspring would endure 400 years, during which there would be exile, persecution and servitude—but not necessarily all of them at the same time. Those 400 years began with the birth of Isaac, since the prophecy referred to Abraham’s *offspring* (Genesis 15:13).”

The New Testament contains evidence that supports a similar method of counting, one that starts the 430 (or 400) years with an event in *Abraham’s* life (rather than late in Jacob’s).

In Galatians 3, the Pharisee-trained Apostle Paul wrote: “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. ... And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul ...*” (verses 16-17; King James Version). This verse states that the covenant with Abraham occurred 430 years BEFORE the giving of the law on Mount Sinai (an event which occurred roughly two months into the Exodus, that same year—i.e. 1446).

The Old English in the King James Version makes this verse a little tricky to follow. The New Living Translation states more simply, “The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses.”

This New Testament passage closely aligns with the traditional Jewish method of counting the 400- and

430-year time frame: Both anchor the *start* of the time period to Abraham, not Jacob.

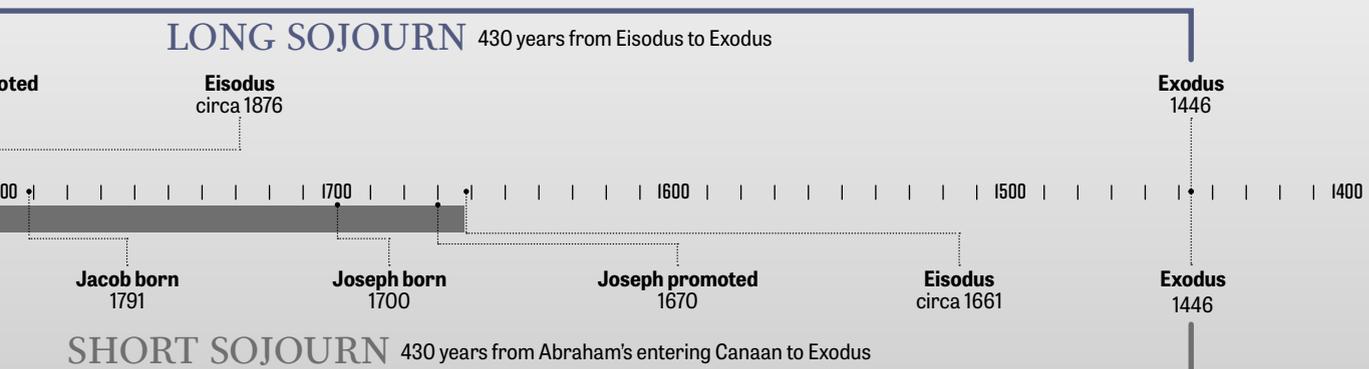
## And Exodus 12:40?

But what about Exodus 12:40, which clearly records that “the *time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt* was four hundred and thirty years”? Can this passage be reconciled with a short sojourn?

Here things get interesting. The early-third-century B.C.E. Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of this verse actually includes the word *Canaan*: “And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt *and the land of Chanaan*, was four hundred and thirty years.”

The listing of *Canaan* together with *Egypt* in this verse is actually found in numerous other ancient manuscripts, including the Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac manuscripts, numerous rabbinical quotations, and the writings of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus. The Dead Sea Scroll 4Q14Exod also contains a similar variant. These sources all attest to the same general understanding among these early Jewish communities that the 430-year period was not solely in Egypt, but also included prior sojourning in *Canaan* during the time of Abraham and Isaac—a sojourn in Canaan in which they too, just as in Egypt, were “strangers in the land.”

The mention of “Canaan” is not found in the Masoretic text. Of course, it can be debated as to whether or not the word was in the original text, given its ubiquity in other ancient manuscripts. But at the same time, as Vilis I. Lietuvietis argues in his lengthy 200-page treatise, “Was the Masoretic Text’s Ex. 12:40 430 Years Sojourn to the Exodus Begun by Abraham or Jacob?”, such a debate is not actually necessary to draw the same conclusions. He highlights that a misunderstanding of the original Hebrew of this verse—a



“failure of translators to regard the context of Exodus 12:40 conditioning the Hebrew meaning”—explains the later rise of “long sojourn” theories. “If this dispute could have been resolved at the grammatical level without considering its context, it would never have arisen,” Lietuvičius proposes.

In briefest summary, Exodus 12:40 is actually highlighting the Israelites at the time of the Exodus *completing* this 430-year period in Egypt. It is not claiming that the *entire* 430 years were spent in Egypt (in the same way that the word “affliction” does not describe the entire 400-year period). As the late Dr. Herman Hoeh offered: “The verb is not expressed in the original Hebrew of Exodus 12:40, which should properly be translated: ‘Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, *completed* four hundred and thirty years’” (*Compendium of World History, Vol. I*). Indeed, the very next verse emphasizes: “And it came to pass *at the END of four hundred and thirty years ....*”

Similar explanations can be found in many of the commentaries (c.f. *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary, Matthew Poole’s Commentary, and Benson’s Commentary* on this verse).

Under the short-sojourn explanation, then, the Israelites—rather than living 430 years solely in Egypt—had a much shorter sojourn in Egypt, with the 430-year

period beginning at God’s covenant with Abraham.

There are different theories as to exactly *when* in Abraham’s life this 430-year period should begin. Does it begin with the Genesis 12 covenant? Or perhaps with the one in Genesis 17? One of the more standard counts begins with the events in Genesis 12, when Abraham was 75 years old. Using this date, the math is easy: Adding 430 years to 1446 B.C.E. (the Exodus) puts Abraham’s birth around 1951 B.C.E. with his entry into Canaan 75 years later around 1876 B.C.E.; the birth of Isaac 25 years later in 1851 B.C.E. (Genesis 21:5); the birth of Jacob in 1791 B.C.E. (Genesis 25:26); and Joseph’s birth around 1700 B.C.E. (Genesis 47:9; 41:46-53; 45:6). Continuing, this puts Joseph’s promotion in Egypt around 1670 B.C.E. and Jacob’s entry with his family into Egypt around 1661 B.C.E.

Again, this is not an absolute endorsement of each of these very

specific dates. Rather, this is a general demonstration of the standard view of biblical chronology using the short sojourn, an early Exodus and 967 B.C.E. as the starting point for Solomon’s temple. There are minor differences in theories for each of these dates, based on which covenant passage serves as the benchmark for the 430 years. Still, the overall chronology is evident: The patriarchal age fell firmly within the first half of the *second* millennium B.C.E.

Using this date,  
the math is easy:  
Adding 430 years  
to 1446 B.C.E.  
(the Exodus) puts  
Abraham’s birth  
around 1951 B.C.E.

#### ► ORIGINS FROM PAGE 5

The beginning of Solomon’s reign as king of Israel truly was magnificent (2 Chronicles 1:1). Solomon had a humble attitude before God, and that made it easy for God to use him. The name *Solomon* comes from the Hebrew *shalom*, which means peace. The words *Salem* and *Solomon* share the same root: *shalam*, meaning *peace, completeness*. (Could David’s recognition of the importance of this city of Melchizedek, *Salem*, have been the reason for him choosing such related names for his sons *Solomon* and *Absalom*?)

Solomon had 200,000 workers

build the most magnificent structure ever to grace the Earth. He commissioned the most skilled laborers available. God said of Solomon, “He shall build a house for My name ...” (1 Chronicles 22:10). When the temple was finished, Solomon had the ark of the covenant brought in with unparalleled pomp and pageantry, including a huge orchestra with 120 priests blowing trumpets! (2 Chronicles 5:12).

Solomon reminded the people what God had told his father, David: “Since the day that I brought forth My people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes

of Israel to build a house in, that My name might be there; neither chose I any man to be prince over My people Israel; but *I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there; and have chosen David to be over My people Israel*” (2 Chronicles 6:5-6).

When King Solomon told his people that God had chosen Jerusalem, he was referring to the past, present and future! King Solomon was no doubt aware of Jerusalem’s history with Abraham and Melchizedek. And perhaps he was also aware that Jerusalem was situated in the same region as the Garden of Eden! ■

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## The Weight of Evidence

As we have briefly seen, this “short sojourn” interpretation was the widely held understanding of different ancient Jewish communities, as well as the early Christian community. It even aligns closely with Islam’s dating for Ishmael (see, for example, *The Great History*, by the ninth-century C.E. Persian scholar Imam Muhammad al-Bukhari, whose work is regarded as second only to the Qur’an).

Josephus was a proponent of the short sojourn (you can read his explanation in *Antiquities of the Jews*, 2.15.2). This was also the position of Demetrius the Chronographer, a third-century B.C.E. historian (Fragment 2, Lines 18-19), as well as the position of first-century Jewish philosopher Philo (*On the Life of Moses*, 1.2.7). The short sojourn also fits with various details contained in the writings of the fifth-century C.E. Greek historian Ctesias.

Finally, this dating of the patriarchal period fits squarely with archaeological evidence.

Take, for example, the cities. Several cities, such as Jerusalem, Hebron and Dan/Laish are mentioned in the Bible in relation to Abraham. Archaeological excavations have revealed that each was constructed around the 19th century B.C.E. Each was present during the short-sojourn time frame of Abraham, but nonexistent during the long-sojourn time frame. It’s a similar story with Tall el-Hammam, identified as biblical Sodom. Archaeologists have revealed a fiery “extinction event” at the site and surrounding areas, dating to the latter part of the first half of the second millennium B.C.E.—more than 200 years *after* a long-sojourn Abraham would have died (read more at [ArmstrongInstitute.org/148](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/148)).

The geopolitical situation in the region also squares nicely. Genesis 14 describes an Elamite-dominated Mesopotamian coalition at the time of Abraham, led by a king with a *Chedor-* (*Kudur-*) title attempting to punish the people of Canaan for failing to pay tribute. This fits squarely—and *only*—with the geopolitical situation within the first half of the second millennium B.C.E.—the “Elamite Conquest” period (2000–1700 B.C.E.), in which coalitions led by Elam (and kings bearing *Kudur-* titles, no less) exerted dominance over territory as far away as the Levant. It’s also during this period that other polities are on the scene—such as the 19th-century King *Eriaku* of *Larsa*, matching with Genesis 14:1’s “Erioch of Ellasar” (see [ArmstrongInstitute.org/299](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/299)).

Is this all mere coincidence?

When did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob live? As we have seen, the weight of evidence shows that the age of the patriarchs can most accurately be dated to the *first* half of the *second* millennium B.C.E. ■

## FEEDBACK

IN RESPONSE TO  
“A STUDY INTO KING SOLOMON’S  
THREE FOUR MONUMENTAL GATES”

**Wow, I just saw the infographic and your article. The base design layout matches the inner and outer court gatehouses of the Ezekiel temple. It’s ultimately all the same author.**

David Wright AUSTRALIA

IN RESPONSE TO  
“THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF  
BIBLICAL MINIMALISM”

One of the best articles ever!!  
Highly recommended!!

Alexander Schick GERMANY

IN RESPONSE TO  
“WHERE DID THE RED  
SEA CROSSING TAKE PLACE?”

I just read this article. Very well done! I watched the film [*Patterns of Evidence: The Red Sea Miracle*], and I was also bothered by the lack of mention of the Suez option. Thanks again for the article and all the articles on the website.

Menachem Schmerling

Read with interest your article explaining the Exodus. The dates and descriptions are very clear, and you also made it easy to understand by way of mathematics.

Chris Tomlinson

IN RESPONSE TO  
“KING HEZEKIAH’S MONUMENTAL  
JERUSALEM INSCRIPTION”

I look forward to each and every time that I get the magazine. Especially since you present it and this show in English. I subscribe to several Israeli channels, including the Antiquities Authority, but many shows are in Hebrew.

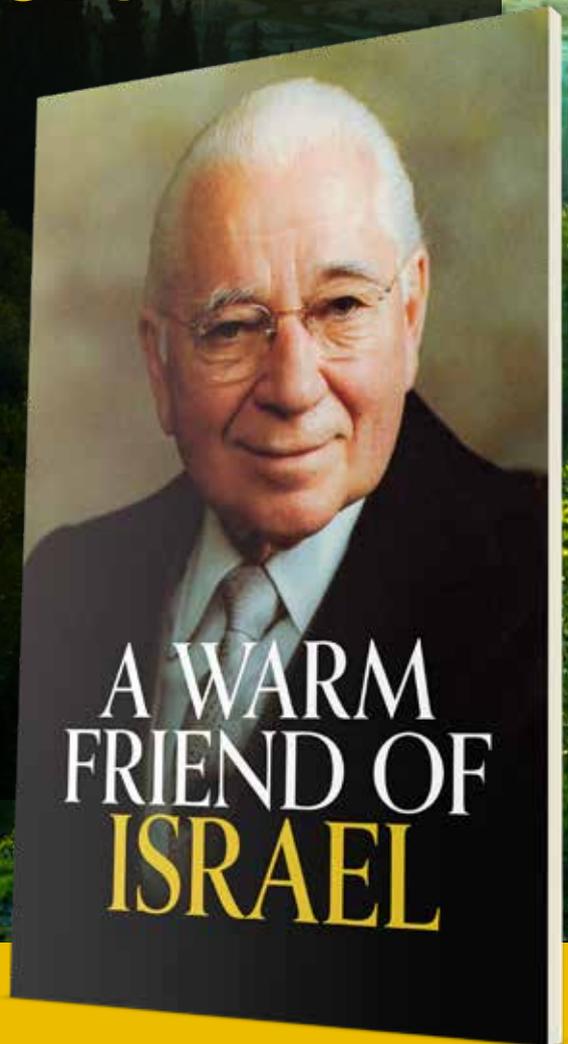
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