

# Faith&Thought

*Relating advances in knowledge to faith within society*

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## **The Bible and Archaeology**

**K.A. Kitchen, A.R. Millard  
and T. Mitchell**

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## Editorial

Faith and Thought is the operating name of the Victoria Institute, a body which was founded in 1865, and was named after the then reigning Queen who became its first President. The Institute is concerned with developments in science, including archaeology, as they relate to the Bible, and the three papers published in this monograph, which were then delivered at a Symposium held in Birkbeck College in London in 2005, deal with different aspects of archaeology and the Old Testament. In each case, archaeology is taken to include not only excavation, but also the study of ancient texts and manuscripts, something which carries on a long tradition of the Institute going back to the nineteenth century in which discoveries in Assyriology, Egyptology and ancient Near Eastern studies in general have been brought forward and discussed.

T.C. Mitchell,  
Chairman

## Introduction

Five papers were read at the Biblical Archaeology Seminar, but only three, those by Kitchen, Millard and Mitchell, are published in this volume.

Professor Colin J. Humphreys in his paper "The Exodus - What Really Happened?" dealt with matters which he has discussed, with other relevant material, in his book *The Miracles of the Exodus* (Continuum, London and New York, 2003), he has concluded that there is no need to repeat his conclusions in this volume.

Dr. John P. Kane concentrated in his Symposium paper mainly on the palaeography of the ossuary inscription "Jacob son of Joseph brother of Yeshu'a", and he has deduced that it would not be sufficiently general for inclusion in the present volume. He has previously provided valuable information on the background of the subject, notably in the article "Burial and Mourning, II, In the New Testament" in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, I, (Leicester, 1980), pp. 212-215; in his review of J. Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament in Studies in Religion* (Toronto) 2 (1972), pp. 57-75; and in his article "The Ossuary Inscriptions of Jerusalem" in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 23 (1978), pp. 268-282. In his Symposium paper Dr. Kane drew attention to the book by H. Shanks and B. Witherington, *The Brother of Jesus* (London and New York, 2003), which, though popular, gives a reasonable account of the discovery of the ossuary and discussion of different views on its authenticity.

## Abbreviations

BZA	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin)
CAD	The Assyrian Dictionary (Chicago)
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum (London)
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
DJD	Discoveries in the Desert of Judah (Oxford)
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature (Philadelphia)
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (Sheffield)
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies (Manchester)
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly (London)
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie (Leipzig, Berlin)

# The Old Testament in its World Today

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## Introduction

After tentative experiments, some two hundred years ago, a tidal wave began to rise, to dismiss the Old Testament as a reliable historical source, culminating in the works of Wellhausen and his contemporaries during the 1870s to 1890s, servilely followed by such as S.R. Driver in Oxford, and contemporaries in both Britain and North America. From then on, almost entirely in isolation, the "battle for the Bible" was fought in an academic vacuum. No serious attempt was made to collate the Old Testament writings with their Ancient Near Eastern context. Largely because, during the 1870s to 1890s, that context remained largely unknown and inaccessible. References to Assyrian kings named in the Old Testament turned up in cuneiform, while Egyptian royal names (in essence, Ramesses (II), Shishak and Tirhakah, Necho (II) and Hophra) emerged from hieroglyphic inscriptions. Those, plus references to a mighty primeval Flood in Babylonian, were almost the sum of such knowledge. West-Semitic sources were limited to the Moabite Stone (1868), the Siloam tunnel inscription (1880s), and a few Aramaic items. Parallel with historical scepticism (no patriarchs; Moses divorced from most of the Pentateuch) ran the arbitrary division of the latter five books into imaginary source-documents, and the drastic remodelling of early Hebrew religion, to give the sequence: primitive "natural" religion, then prophecy and "reform", then priest-dominated cult, with the law set up as normative only after the Babylonian Exile. By the First World War, the process of repetition in print and in collegiate teaching ensured that this body of purely theoretical concepts was progressively enshrined as though it were absolute truth, not to be challenged. This attitude, not rational belief in the authenticity of the Old Testament, was and still is, the real *a priori* "fundamentalism" of anti-intellectual stamp. And so things stayed from the 1880s into the 1930s.

But during the period c. 1920-1940, there was a brief "golden age" of archaeology in the Near East, highlighted by particularly spectacular discoveries such as the tomb of the pharaoh Tutankhamun, and the great Sumerian tombs at Ur in Iraq. Then by major archives such as the 20,000 tablets at ancient Mari, and those in a 'new' West-Semitic language at Ugarit, having much affinity with biblical Hebrew. And, at last, a proper material archaeology of Palestine began to be established, that could be aligned with known historical periods in both ancient Near-Eastern and biblical history. In the light of the new perspectives thus to be gained from work in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Syria as well as in Palestine, enquiring minds in North America, less dominated by German dogma than was Europe, began to correlate the vast new resources with the Old Testament data, and dared to doubt the *a priori* "critical consensus". This was led by W.F. Albright, a scholar of very wide learning and considerable vision, and then his

former students John Bright, G.E. Wright, F.M. Cross, D.N. Freedman and others besides, during the 1940s to 1970s.

The new input was stimulating, often fact-based, but not all of it was soundly-founded. In obscurantist mood, German scholarship largely held back from the new approaches, and from the 1970s onward, hostile sceptics (such as T.L. Thompson, J. van Seters, D.B. Redford) sought to discredit the “Albright school”. It was easy to pick off the mistakes of that group, and to turn more recent developments against them, especially when dead and unable therefore to reply to their critics. However, as usual, the neo-critical school had nothing really new or constructive to offer; they were - and are - still immured in the far more serious errors of the 1870s-1890s, compounded with a few more of recent date. And in the last decades of the 20th century, running into the 21st century present, the mood of scepticism has in effect run amok, with ever wilder and more strident anti-biblical propaganda trumpeted on all sides.

But going back to a 19th-century mentality, and in cultural isolation, solves nothing. All views need to be put to the test, against a systematically assembled *factual* panorama of life and thought as actually given us by 3,000 years of literate civilisation in the pre-Roman Near East. Which is nearer to the truth by this factual acid test: the Old Testament that we actually possess, or the hypothetical reconstructions by 19th-century gurus and their latter-day imitators? Already, back in 1966, I advocated such a programme of systematic collation of the Hebrew Bible against its ancient context;<sup>1</sup> but this appeal has largely fallen on deaf ears this past 40 years. It is easier to stay in well-trodden paths, and have an easier life, than to branch out into the rigours of less familiar ancient languages or of systematic archaeology. So, the really urgent and pioneering work still remains largely unattempted and not done. Maybe, some day, some will catch the vision, and buckle down to the honest and long-enduring hard work that is called-for, if any enduring and worthwhile results are to be attained and permanently established. One voice crying out in the wilderness cannot do all. But here, it must suffice to exemplify what fruits can be gained from such studies; today a handful of such case-histories must suffice.

### **Early Times: Adam to Exodus**

**Adam to Abraham.**<sup>2</sup> Very wisely, the writer of the opening of the book of Genesis dates the Creation simply to “In the beginning ...”. In heroic times gone by, bold spirits like Archbishop Ussher tried to date that primordial event simply by totting up all the years BC from a safe point like Ezra and Nehemiah under well-known Persian kings, back through exile and monarchy, and Judges to Abraham, by simply stringing all the numbers back in one line, and then doing the same to the birth-intervals from Abraham back to Adam, to reach the figure of 4004 BC. However, this kind of procedure fails on several points. It assumes that every single figure has been preserved perfectly; not impossible, but figures were sometimes notoriously difficult so to transmit in antiquity. It also

assumes that ancient figures were to be treated as if composed by modern Europeans, and not in any other way, and that no abbreviations had taken place. And (before the last half-century of work) it is subject to error even in monarchy times, because the modes of calculation employed then were not properly understood prior to 1944. And the schematic or abbreviated use of genealogies was not envisaged. The biblical books are *not* modern compositions, but ancient ones, and their methods are those of far antiquity, *not* of our modern times.

Thus, Hebrew tradition shares not only the concepts of initial Creation and of a punitive Flood with its Mesopotamian contemporaries, but also (more importantly) the entire framework of:

Creation > *generations* > Crisis (Flood) > *generations* > “modern times”.

In this context, “modern times” is c. 2000 B.C. Alongside Genesis 1 - 11, we have three other ‘primeval protohistories’, namely the Sumerian King List, the Atrakhasis Epic, and the “Eridu Genesis”. All reflect the same basic concept, and none were composed any later than within c. 2000-1600 B.C. In other words, this was a current theme and type of composition in Mesopotamia in patriarchal times. Such matters were live and current when Abraham left for Ur for Harran and Canaan. But never again. After c. 1600, people ceased to compose any more such treatments of far antiquity, but were content merely to continue recopying these old works for the 15 to 20 centuries that followed - just as people today no longer write Shakespeare plays or medieval chronicles, but simply reissue them in successive modern reprints. Thus, Genesis 1 - 11 should be treated as preserving the oldest-formed biblical traditions, ancient even to Abraham.

**The Patriarchs** It was dogma from 1880 to the 1940s, that (following Wellhausen) the patriarchal narratives preserved no history, but merely reflected the period of the much later Hebrew monarchy. Here, Albright and others objected, and offered a variety of features that seemed to set the patriarchs squarely in the 2nd millennium B.C., especially its earlier half. Then, from the 1970s onward, the die-hard sceptics tried to put the clock back almost a century, by showing up weaknesses in part of the Albright-style case, and then decrying the rest noisily but in error. More recent minimalists have simply extended the hostile rhetoric and the errors, but can offer nothing more. Contrary to all these shrieking siren voices, a careful examination of the available factual data shows (i) that the patriarchal narratives have almost nothing in common with the Hebrew monarchy period (except that both are largely in Canaan!) and (ii) that there is a firm residue of indicators for reaffirming the dating of the patriarchs and various features of the traditions about them back in the early 2nd millennium B.C. - in fact, more than previously.<sup>3</sup> Let us note these briefly.

First, wide scope of non-royal, long-distance travel, as when Terah and Abraham migrated from Ur to Harran, and Abraham onward to Canaan, and Abraham visited Egypt, and his descendants lodged there. As others have noted, this was a period (Old-Babylonian

epoch, c. 1900-1600 BC) with unusually open freedom of movement for people other than the privileged few (*e.g.* kings and armies, royal envoys, merchants).

Second, similarly wide-ranging pastoral transhumance of people and herds/flocks in the same epoch, from southern Babylonia (*cf.* Ur), up into Upper Mesopotamia, across to Syria to Lebanon and Amurru.

Third, long-distance marriages; both Abraham and Jacob sent or travelled back to Haran to procure wives for son or self, even as Shamsi-Adad I of Assyria in the east obtained a daughter for his own son from the King of Qatna in the Syrian west, with which city the kings of Mari also kept up relations.

Fourth, both Abraham and Joseph and Jacob met their respective pharaohs in the East Delta (not 100 miles upstream at more distant Memphis). This was only possible at certain periods, such as c.1970-1540 BC, during the 12th-15th Dynasties. Earlier is irrelevant; later was not possible until Moses' time about the late 14th/13th centuries BC (much too late for the patriarchs!)

Fifth, the appearance of alliances from the East (Mesopotamia and neighbours) in Genesis 14. In greater Mesopotamia, such alliances were commonplace between the jostling groups of city-states that flourished independently between the fall of the empire of the 3rd Dynasty of Ur (c. 2000 BC) and the supremacy over most of Mesopotamia attained by Hammurabi of Babylon, c. 1750/1700 BC, after whom only the basic kingdoms of Babylon and Assyria remained as major players

Sixth, the intervention of Elam (from W. Iran) away up in Upper Mesopotamia and in some matters further westward (*e.g.* envoys to Qatna), as in Genesis 14. Never before, and never again, did distant Elam get involved beyond her local squabbles with Babylon and Assyria.

Seventh, Genesis 14 finds a close literary and topical parallel (but from an Easterner's viewpoint!) in the foundation-inscription of Iahdun-Lim, King of Mari, of the 18th century BC.

Eighth, the name of Tid'al, ruler of groups in Genesis 14, is but a Hebrew transcript of the well-attested Hittite royal name Tudkhalia, first attested in Hittite records from before the Old Kingdom (*i.e.*, before c. 1650 BC), and still earlier as a Hittite name in the Old-Assyrian merchant-records in Anatolia, c. 1950-1840 BC. At that period, local supreme chiefs were masters of confederated settlements or groups, like Tid'al.<sup>4</sup>

Ninth, the treaties between the patriarchs and their neighbours and relations (Gen. 21; 31; 36) find clear analogues in actual treaties published from Mari and Tell Leilan, of the 18th century BC, and of no other periods when treaty-formats were entirely different.

Tenth, the price paid for Joseph (Gen. 37:28) at 20 shekels agrees well with the average prices of young male slaves at that sum, in both a Mari tablet and the Laws of Hammurabi, 18th century BC. Prices rose in later times, and were cheaper in previous epochs.

Eleventh, social usages (marriage, children, inheritance, etc.) correspond with those known from the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, these comparisons petering out after the Nuzi period (15th century).

Twelfth, patriarchal religion shows early-2nd-millennium usage, and differs clearly from that of later times in several respects.

Thirteenth, patriarchal Canaan is a land of small city-states and of areas within which pastoralists (like the patriarchs) could circulate freely; it is the world of the Egyptian Execration-Texts that list city states and tribal hinterlands and groups in the 19th/18th centuries BC. All of this is radically different from the Canaan of the Hebrew monarchy, unified under its monarchs to the exclusion of little more than Philistia and Phoenicia, and without independent tribal pastoralists within its borders (goodbye, Wellhausen!).

Fourteenth, the patriarchal proper names are mainly of well-attested types; the so-called Amorite Imperfective type (initial Y in Hebrew; initial J in English) is found overwhelmingly in the early 2nd millennium, and massively less in any later period.

Fifteenth, their shepherding usages are closer to the Old-Babylonian than to later periods.

Sixteenth, the Egyptian titles "in the house", "over the house" (for domestic servants) is mainly Old and Middle-Kingdom terminology (3rd and early 2nd millennium BC).

Seventeenth, the term *saris* is used of officials, not eunuchs, in Egypt, and mainly so in the parallel Old-Babylonian period.

There are also other features going back to the early 2nd millennium, but which continue into later times also. One may add that camels are *not* anachronistic at this period, as external data show, "Philistines" is a 12th-century substitution for some outdated term (such as Caphtorim, etc.) and the patriarchal ones are in character very unlike those of the later Pentapolis. Other minor adjustments are likewise from later times, but have no bearing on the basic date of the main patriarchal data.

In the light of the foregoing, there is no reason whatsoever to doubt either the former existence of these folk, or the fact of transmission of data from their lives and epoch without which the phenomena listed would be very difficult to account for.

**Exodus and Sinai/Moab Covenant** Well after the period of the patriarchs, the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy purport to record the oppression of their descendants, the early Hebrews, in Egypt, their exodus from Egypt, their establishment by covenant as subjects of their deity YHWH, first in Sinai, then renewed in Moab and Canaan, and the instituting of a portable shrine and cult in YHWH's honour as their sovereign. Precisely as with the patriarchs, all of this has been summarily dismissed both in the 19th century and currently as if it were 100% fiction - and with no more justification than in the case of the patriarchs. Here again, there is very considerable background that rules out a late/fictional origin. And again, we must summarise this situation with concision.<sup>5</sup>

Much nonsense has been talked about “no trace of the Exodus is found in Egypt, therefore no Exodus”. Such allegations neatly sidestep the underlying reasons for the apparent silence. First, the exodus of a large body of slaves with loss of a royal chariot-squadron following on other severe losses to Egypt represented a physical and ideological defeat for the pharaoh concerned; *and no pharaoh ever commemorated disasters of this kind*. And in the wet Delta mud, no papyrus records survive. We have only a few wine-jar labels!

Second, like any other bottom-of-the-pile labourers, the Hebrew slaves would have lived rough, in mud hovels at most, in temporary encampments, moved around when and where needed. These simply dissolved back into the ground, once abandoned. Such people left no identifying traces.

Third, the actual work-conditions recorded (as in Exodus 4, etc.) do find clear analogues in specifically Egyptian data. The use of two levels of oversight: the Egyptian overseers armed with staff or whip; the concern for numbers and quality of bricks produced; the use of straw in the making of bricks [to enhance plasticity and good drying] - all these and other aspects are clearly mirrored in such Egyptian sources as the brickmaking scene in the tomb-chapel of Rekhmire, the Louvre leather scroll (Year 5 of Ramesses II), the “Miscellany” papyri, and so on. On top of these is the issue of absence from work for worship or similar reasons (cf. Exodus 5:1-4). Pharaoh’s annoyance is well understandable if one peruses the work-registers for the teams labouring in the Valley of the Kings, and notes the long series of absences from work that these often reveal. Not least those that give reasons for individual absenteeism; having a birthday; brewing beer with the boss; mummifying or burying a relative; and “worshipping his God”.

Fourth, the sequence and content of the infamous plagues that smote Egypt on the eve of the Exodus (Exodus 7 - 11). Quite some time ago, it was shown that the first nine plagues form an interrelated sequence based directly on conditions that reflect an excessive annual Nile-flood, through the Egyptian agricultural year from July/August through to March/April. This had to derive ultimately from somebody who had actually seen such conditions on the spot (in Egypt); it could not simply be invented by some over-imaginative priest in exilic Babylon a thousand miles away, centuries later.

Fifth, the geography of the Exodus is coherent so far as it can be followed.<sup>6</sup> *Raamses* is none other than the massive East Delta capital Pi-Ramesse (based around Khataana-Qantir) built by Ramesses II, and covering an area about four miles long (north-south) by two miles wide (west-east). It long eluded detection, because it had been razed to the ground from c.1070 BC onwards to provide building materials for the next Delta capital, Tanis (Zoan); only foundations are left. But ground-penetrating radar has vividly revealed the ground-plans of palaces, horse-stabling, workshops, etc. South of it, at no great distance, was *Pithom*, to be located very probably at Tell er-Retaba. This was too far west to lie on the Exodus-route, hence it features only as a building site (Ex.

1:11). But it was in fact nine Roman miles from Tell Maskhuta, which was *Succoth* (and NOT Pithom, as inscriptions make clear), on the escape-route to the south-east; this exit was later also used by a pair of slaves under Sethos II. Beyond that point, the trail currently gets fainter, but would go slightly north, then east through the *yam-suph* or Sea of Reeds, a zone irrevocably changed by the building of the Suez Canal some 130 years ago. Thence, south along the west side of the Sinai peninsula, well away from the Mediterranean and its road bristling with Egyptian army-depots and fortresses in Ramesses II's time, and thus to be avoided (cf. Ex. 13:17-18).

Sixth, the ecology of the travels through Sinai and on to the Arabah and up towards Moab shows a variety of natural features that bear on the route. This applies to water and wells down Sinai's west side, to water from the rock, to the direction and seasonal landings of quails, and to people sinking into mudflats (*kewirs*), Nu. 16). All these phenomena are special to the districts concerned - not remotely familiar to captives in later Babylon.

Seventh, the Sinai Covenant (Exodus-Leviticus) and its renewals in Moab (Deuteronomy) and Canaan (Joshua 24). The format and content of this covenant is clear, especially in its simplest reports (Deut.; Jos.24). It has title-lines, historical prologue, a full set of laws/stipulations, deposit of the text by the Ark and to be read out periodically; there were witnesses; and it was sanctioned by blessings and curses, for obedience or disobedience. This format and content is very specific, and is reflected in treaties of the 14th/13th centuries BC - and from no other period, in the 2000 years (c. 2600-650) during which such items are attested. Only the blessings/curses sequence (with more curses than blessings) is a yet *older* inheritance from the law-collection tradition going back to Lipit-Ishtar and Hammurabi in the patriarchal period. Nothing is later, where evidence exists. The endless yapping about Deuteronomic theology (and the book Deuteronomy) dating only from the 7th century BC is a delusion: "Deuteronomic" principles occur all over the biblical world, from the 2nd millennium onwards, as does monotheism (cf. Akhenaten of Egypt). Hence, we have no valid excuse not to trace the Sinai covenant back to the period of the Exodus.

Eighth, the Tabernacle and its cult. For most of this last century, it has been condemned by biblicists as a late "priestly fiction", dreamed up in exile in Babylon (from at least Wellhausen onwards). However, the truth appears to be the opposite. Collapsible shrines and ceremonial structures were used and known in Egypt from before the Pyramids, over 1000 years before Moses, never mind the Exile. Mother of Kheops who built the Great Pyramid at Giza, Queen Hetepheres, had just such a gold-plated wooden tabernacle as part of her bedroom suite; the recovered original is in Cairo Museum, and a full-sized facsimile in Boston Museum. Other Egyptian examples (in tomb-scenes) were used for funerary and mummification rites, all in the 3rd millennium BC. In the early 2nd millennium (patriarchal period), the authorities at Mari on the Middle Euphrates

used such structures for outdoor worship - in rectangular enclosures (just as in Exodus), using the same terminology (*qarasu*). Coming down to Moses' period, the war-tent of Ramesses II at the battle of Qadesh was of the same design as the Hebrew Tabernacle, also within a rectangular enclosure (in his case, of shields). Contemporary with this, the god El at Ugarit in N. Phoenicia is described as using a tabernacle and the term *qrs* again is mentioned. Then, in the 12th century, the Midianites at Timna (NE Sinai) built a fixed tabernacle, with stone base, wooden frame and yellow and red woollen cover (traces were found). And so on. Thus, the use of collapsible, portable structures is widely and well attested, from considerable antiquity down to the Exodus and even later (not, so far, after the 11th century). Significantly, no Mesopotamian temple or site shows any use of such structures after the 13th century BC. Thus, the whole of our evidence, positive and negative, condemns outright the negativism of Wellhausen and his servile followers to this day. The use of ritual and offering is attested as far back as ancient temples and shrines go, for millennia before either Moses or the Exile. No Hebrew need have waited until the latter to learn about the priestly service or offerings and ritual! That of the Tabernacle was quite incredibly simple and 'primitive': a small offering twice daily, and barely a dozen feasts in the year. Contrast the festal calendar of 15th-12th century Egyptian Thebes with almost 60 annual festivals, some of immense length (up to 3 weeks!), wealth of foods and lavish magnificence. Or the daily rites of an Egyptian temple - a six-act rite, twice daily? Away with such poverty! Pharaoh's temples had thrice daily offertories with rituals habitually 48 to 62 'acts' long! Scapegoat rites, priesthood installation rites, use of long-shaft trumpets, - these and much more from Exodus-Leviticus and Numbers were customary in the biblical world from at least Moses' time and also well before his epoch.

In short, look where we may, there is abundant and emphatically 'early' background that gives us the real context of what we find at the Exodus and its consequences at Sinai.

### **Later Times: the Hebrew Monarchies and After**

**United Monarchy: David & Solomon** After the entry into Canaan and settlement there, the Hebrews found themselves eventually under much pressure, especially from the Philistines, and resorted to asking for a human king. The first one, Saul, came adrift, and eventually succumbed to the Philistine threat. After him, his youthful lieutenant, David, was appointed. He not only repulsed the Philistine foe, but took over his East-of-Jordan neighbours, which involved him with the Arameans from the north. Defeating them gave him control of central Syria, and alliance with Hamath access to the W. bend of the Euphrates.

So arose what should be called a "mini-empire". The vast Hittite and Egyptian empires had crashed or crumbled by c. 1180 (Hittites) and c. 1150 (Egyptians), leaving the Levant to make its own way. No other major power arose until the reawakening of Assyria in

the 9th century BC. But within the three centuries between c.1180 and 900 BC, there was a power-vacuum in the Levant and environs - and lesser powers arose to fill it. These were local empires with vassals, but *not* on the vast scale of Egypt, Hatti or Assyria. In the north, Tarhuntassa took over the southern edge of Anatolia and, as Tabal, lasted until the Assyrians arrived about the 8th century. In N. Syria, its neighbour, Carchemish, kept control of the areas it had ruled formerly under central Hittite control, and its kings (like Tarhuntassa) then took the appropriate title of "Great King", only giving it up in the 10th century, when their dominion collapsed, leaving Carchemish as simply a city-state.<sup>7</sup>

This was partly under Aramean pressure by c. 1000-990 BC, from Aram-Zobah, whose ruler even gained control of the Euphrates fords (as reported by a later Assyrian king). This was most likely the biblical Hadadezer, then overthrown by David who inherited his mantle and passed this Israelite dominion on to Solomon. However, after a firm beginning and an ambitious building-programme, Solomon's wisdom failed him eventually, and by the end of his reign he lost Aram (and thus Hamath) and Edom. After this time, the Hebrew kingdom split in two, and these fragments had to cope successively with the prowling powers of Egypt, Aram-Damascus, and finally Assyria. For all this, we have Samuel and Kings.

However, our minimalist 'friends', both old and new, will have none of it. For them David and Solomon either did not exist, or at best were shadows of what the biblical writers portray. And, as usual, this issue reflects the unevenness of current knowledge, and misunderstanding (both genuine and deliberate) of what we do have. The charge that the Davidic-Solomonic "empire" is but a reflection of the later vast Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires will not wash; these were radically different not only in size but also in organisation. The "mini-empire" period (1180-900) is a special phenomenon unto itself, and must be recognised as such, thanks to the external data from Tarhuntassa and Carchemish, and intelligent use of the Assyrian asides and biblical data.

David's real existence is no longer open to any legitimate doubt. After much silly fuss, the mention of the "House (= Dynasty) of David" on the Tel Dan stela should be regarded as definitive; and a damaged mention on the Moabite stone is very probable (with no convincing alternative). These are (at c.840 BC) barely 130 years after his death. More dramatic still, date-wise, is the highly probable reading of *hadabiyat-Dawit*, "Heights of David", in the topographical list of Shishak (Shoshenq I of Egypt) of c.925 BC, less than 50 years after David's death. Again, no convincing alternative is apparent.

As for Solomon, we need always to bear in mind the sheer destruction of Jerusalem as a building-site, over and over again (Neo-Babylonians; Persians; Seleucids and Hasmoneans; Herod and Rome; Byzantines; Arabic rulers; Crusaders; the Ottomans;

and modern times ...). It is almost a wonder that anything survives; and much today is covered by the buildings of the existing city, and remains entirely inaccessible. So, we need not expect to recover anything structural from either his temple or his palace. However, from the descriptions in Kings, both institutions can be seen to conform to well-attested models known archaeologically from Syria-Palestine and places further afield. Likewise, such details as gold-sheet decoration, cherubim, and multi-storey storerooms around the outside of the Temple. The same applies to such furnishings as the wheeled lavers for example. Many palace features can likewise be paralleled.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, Solomon is said to have built at Gezer, Megiddo and Hazor; three matching gateways at these sites in suitable datable strata would illustrate this; noisy objections to this dating rest on PC prejudice, not on the total facts available.

His foreign relations are above criticism. Unlike Amenophis III some 400 years earlier, the pharaohs of the Late Period were entirely willing to marry off daughters to both foreigners and commoners to further their political aims. So a daughter of pharaoh could well be welcomed into Solomon's court. The action at Gezer (cf. 1 Kings 9:16) suggests that Solomon and a pharaoh had collaborated to crush Philistine and local Canaanite opposition; on date, this would fall into the reign of Siamun, of whom we have a minor martial monument. And the Queen of Sheba hailed from a developing kingdom; her involvement in politics is no different to that of North-Arabian queens a century or so later in Assyrian sources.

There can be no objection to Solomon's association with wisdom writings (cf. Prov. 1:1); in this, he was heir to an almost 2,000-year-old tradition in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and his work on multiple grounds is consistent with a 10th-century date.

As for wealth, the gifts of 120 talents of gold from the king of Tyre and the queen of Sheba are quite ordinary; two centuries later, Metten II of Tyre had to pay 150 talents to Tigalath-pileser III of Assyria. The 666 talents Solomon received in a year (about 26 tons) is more imposing - but is abject poverty when compared with the 383 tons of gold and silver that Osorkon I gave to the gods of Egypt, beginning just 4 years after his father Shishak's raid on Rehoboam of Judah and neighbouring Jeroboam. Where did most of that (even for Egypt) unparalleled sum come from, if not substantially from the late Solomon's hoarded wealth? In 30 years he might have amassed about 500 tons; but that pales into insignificance compared with what Alexander the Great extracted from the far vaster Persian Empire; 1,180 tons of gold at Susa, and a breathtaking 7,000 tons overall. Any talk of fantasy in Solomon's figures is, to say the least, premature.

### **Divided Kingdoms to Persian Judea**

**The Twin Kingdoms** Here, we concentrate on the Egyptian episodes. Shishak's campaign in Palestine is amply attested by his own monuments, notably the great scene and topographical list at Karnak in Thebes, and by the stela (now a mere fragment) that he planted in Megiddo, as visiting card and mark of his overlordship (however brief).

Back in Egypt, Shishak celebrated his victory with investment in enormous temple buildings. The only one to survive is the great colonnaded forecourt at Karnak temple, left (like the adjoining gateway) wholly unfinished at his sudden death within about a year of his campaign. The surviving content of the topographical list shows that he brought Jeroboam to book as well as Rehoboam.

Later contacts were more friendly, if sometimes ill-starred. In about 725 BC, Hoshea (last king of Israel) rebelled against Assyria, expecting help from So of Egypt - but none came, and his kingdom was ended by the Assyrians by 722. So would at this date have been Osorkon IV, the all but powerless last ruler of the 22nd Dynasty, founded by the mighty Shishak just over 200 years before. As <U>shilkanni, the luckless Osorkon IV had in turn to grovel to Sargon II of Assyria. A few years later, it was prince Taharqa as ruler of Kush that Shebitku as king in Egypt sent out against Sennacherib in 701 BC (to the great confusion of Egyptologically disorientated biblical scholars). Not so about Necho II of Egypt slaying Josiah of Judah in 609 BC, or about Hophra (Apries) letting down Zedekiah in 588/587 BC.

**Arabia comes as our end** The Exile was a Babylonian affair. But the Jews that resettled in Judea under the Persian Empire had other foes. Sanballat of Samaria and Tobiah of Ammon belonged to familiar contexts, but not so Nehemiah's third foe, Geshem/Gashmu, the Arabian. A discovery in the Egyptian East Delta revealed an Arabian shrine, whence came costly votive gifts, including a silver bowl dedicated by "Qaynu son of Geshem, King of Qedar", and Greek coins of the 4th/early 5th century BC. So, Geshem stands revealed as a close southern neighbour of Nehemiah in the later 5th century BC. The foregoing deliberately bald, concise, sharply contoured extract from the data that suggest our Old Testament is serious writing must for the moment stand for a much greater whole. Its message is clear.

## References

- 1 K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, London: Tyndale Press, 1966, 171-173, in simple form; see now Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, [hereinafter cited as *OROT*], 497-499, also briefly.
- 2 For what follows, see more fully *OROT*, chapter 9 (pp. 421-447), and references (pp. 591-597).
- 3 For an extensive treatment, see *OROT*, chapter 7 (pp. 313-372), and references (pp. 566-581).
- 4 Cf. long since, with references, Kitchen, *Ancient Orient & Old Testament*, London: Tyndale Press, 1966.
- 5 See for full details and references, my *OROT*, chapter 6 (pp. 241-312) and notes (pp. 553-566).
- 6 Besides *OROT*, see my paper "Egyptians and Hebrews from Ra'amses to Jericho", in E.D. Oren (ed.), *The Origins of Early Israel - Current Debate* (Beer-Sheva XII), London/Beersheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1998, 65-131, esp. 69-85.

- 7 See Kitchen, "The Controlling Role of External Evidence in assessing the Historical Status of the Israelite United Monarchy", in V.P. Long, D.W. Baker, G.J. Wenham (eds.), *Windows into Old Testament History*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, 111-130 with maps. For the rest of this section, cf. *OROT*, chapter 4 (pp. 81-158) and notes thereto (pp. 520-539).
- 8 Cf. *OROT*, 122-131, with plates XVII-XX.

# **The Bible and Archaeology: Friends or Foes?**

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The Hebrew Bible stood as the solitary survivor from the cultures of the ancient Near East until about 150 years ago and its witness was unchallenged. Then the application of analytical techniques to the text led many to conclude its testimony was unreliable, its statements often had little or no factual basis and could not reflect the eras in which they were set.

Simultaneously, discoveries in the Near East began to reveal an enormous wealth of first hand evidence about those biblical times. Some Christians hailed them as proof that the Bible is true and some still echo that cry today. Others argue that the ancient remains did not affect the conclusions of literary analysis and the history of religions scheme, the 'higher criticism', and their descendants are shouting with renewed energy today. Can either party justify its claim? How do the Bible and archaeology relate to each other?

## **The Hebrew Bible**

The Hebrew Bible is available in manuscripts copied 1,000 years ago and in fragments copied 2,000 years ago, the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>1</sup> Its text, therefore, is the product of many generations of scribes' work and so liable to scribal errors. In fact, the scribes worked with remarkable care, as various details show.<sup>2</sup> Yet even if they copied the texts with great care, do those texts reflect reliably the events and circumstances of the ages they claim to describe? They survive as religious works and most were written from a religious perspective - the Song of Songs may be an exception. They were written to promote what may be called Israelite orthodoxy and so they are clearly biased; their authors would have admitted that, yet they would have maintained that their point of view was the true one and so their representation of past events was equally true. For them, those past events were history, history that was relevant to and affected their own situations. Clearly, if they were wrong, if they were deliberately creating false pictures, then any teachings they based upon them would have little value and no authority for anyone else, then or now.

## **Archaeology: Possibilities and Limitations**

Modern archaeology is a complex activity, producing remarkable results that enable us to envisage past ages more accurately and more vividly than ever before. Yet with all its techniques, it has many limitations, most notably it cannot re-create ancient personalities, their thoughts or their languages, without written documents. Examination of an ancient pot may reveal the time of year when it was made - by the inclusion of grains, seeds or pollen - where it was made - by analysis of the clay - the minerals used in its painted decoration, the heat at which it was fired, perhaps what its function was and what it

once contained. The name of the potter and his work-place, the precise year of manufacture, the price of the vessel and the name of its purchaser are beyond the scope of the material analysis. In the same way, a building may be identified as a temple, one of a known type, but the identity of the deity worshipped, the rituals performed and priests responsible remain unknown. Where there is a brief written record the situation changes. A simple inscription put on a Babylonian brick about 4,500 years ago illustrates the point. It says 'Ur-Nanshe, king of Lagash, son of Gunidu, built the temple of Ningirsu'.<sup>3</sup> An archaeologist should be able to identify and give a date for the building which had this brick in its wall.

### **The Role of Written Records**

The Bible is a written document, so whatever material remains may be found and related to it, other written documents are likely to provide the most precise information about its contents. Here is one example. Excavations at the site known as Sebastiyeh in the centre of the Holy Land during the 1930s recovered numerous pieces of carved ivory. They were not found *in situ* but in disturbed levels.<sup>4</sup> Comparable pieces have been discovered at several sites in Syria and Iraq, especially at Nimrud, ancient Kalah, south of Nineveh, where hundreds of pieces lay smashed in the ruins of buildings destroyed or abandoned. A stylistic correlation can be made between these groups of ivories, but nothing more precise can be established unless the evidence of written records is introduced. They reveal that all the sites were occupied by the Assyrians whose rule the Babylonians and Medes brought to an end in 612 B.C. Assyrian records boast of the capture of Samaria just over a century earlier and other sources explain that it was the ancient capital of Israel, renamed Sebaste by king Herod in the first century B.C. The ivories evidently belonged to the Israelite capital and, we may assume, more probably to the Israelite palaces than to the Assyrian occupation. Here the role of the texts is essential in bringing precision to the understanding of the objects. With their evidence, the ivories can then be taken as examples of the decoration reported for king Ahab's palace in 1 Kings 22:39 and for the mansions of wealthy Samaritans by the prophet Amos (3:15).

Ancient records are full of the names of kingdoms and peoples. The Philistines are one of the few whose names are still current, as Palestine, and whose presence is established by archaeological excavations. At sites in the south-west of the Holy Land there are clear signs of a population with an intrusive material culture evidently related to the culture of the Aegean in the 13th and 12th centuries B.C. There is a distinctive ceramic repertoire beside the local one, curved iron knives, loom-weights like fat sausages, figurines and architectural features which have no precedents in the Near East. Egyptian inscriptions and biblical references led to the identification of these elements as relics of the Philistines.<sup>5</sup> It seems to me the strength of this case has heightened the belief that an equally clear distinction should be possible in the case of the Israelites. However, the material remains from other parts of the country display no comparable changes.

Ceramic forms of the Late Bronze Age continue into the Iron Age and metal tools and weapons exhibit the same forms; there is little or no trace of a new population entering the land between 1300 and 1100 B.C. (The dates of the Exodus and the Conquest are best taken as falling in the 13th century B.C.) Consequently there is a growing chorus of scholars proclaiming that the Israelites were latter-day Canaanites, large numbers of whom supposedly moved from the towns in the valleys and coastal region to settle in the hills in the face of Egyptian oppression. I have discussed this matter in an earlier lecture.<sup>6</sup> There I used the Amorites in Babylonia as an analogy. Those tribespeople moved into the land of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers from the north-west over several centuries, taking control about 2,000 B.C. Multitudes of contemporary documents attest their presence at every level of society, but no objects have been found, no buildings, no patterns, which are recognisably new to the area and so possibly Amorite rather than Babylonian. Here the similar situations with other peoples can be added. In the 19th century B.C. merchants from Assyria set up trading centres in many parts of Anatolia. At one in particular, ancient Kanesh, modern Kultepe, north-east of Kayseri, they abandoned their houses, leaving behind their business documents written on clay tablets. Over 25,000 cuneiform tablets have been unearthed there and they reveal the presence of people bearing Indo-European names in Anatolia at that time; nothing in the domestic utensils or architecture displays any feature that can be characterised as Indo-European. Slightly later, the kingdom of Mitanni arose in Upper Mesopotamia which had a large population of people called Hurrians, but the language of the names of the rulers of Mitanni is Indo-Aryan (related to Sanskrit). No reputable scholar separates Indo-European from Hurrian material, or can definitely divide Hurrian products from the general range of north Mesopotamian material. The best that can be said is that certain styles became popular in that area at that time. It is mistaken, therefore, to deduce that the absence of identifiably Israelite remains in the Holy Land in the last two centuries of the 2nd millennium B.C. means that there was no change of population, that Canaanites became Israelites. The archaeological evidence is not at odds with the biblical, it is the current interpretation which needs re-assessment.

### Testing the Texts

Archaeological discoveries can often illuminate the contents of ancient texts and help in verifying their statements by revealing whether or not certain customs or artefacts were current at the times the texts indicate, whether or not the texts contain anachronisms. One significant example is the armour of the giant Goliath. A prominent Egyptologist wrote a book *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* a few years ago in which he asserted that the armour Goliath wore is 'late', that is to say, is of a type that belongs to the seventh century B.C., or after, and so cannot realistically describe the equipment of a Philistine warrior of the eleventh century B.C. It is a 'blatant anachronism'.<sup>7</sup> The description of Goliath's armour and weapons is given in 1 Samuel 17:5,6. He had 'a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of bronze scale-armour which weighed five

thousand shekels. On his legs he had bronze greaves and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels.' In that passage there occur four times the word 'bronze' and once the word 'iron'. The ratio of those words to each other gives a valuable clue to the age of the equipment. If the history of Goliath had been invented in the seventh century B.C., or later, the proportion of metals would be strange. By that date, the armour and weapons of a champion would be made entirely of iron; bronze was old-fashioned, although still used. Assyrian weaponry makes that clear. There were coats of scale armour of iron beside the older bronze fashion, helmets of iron beside bronze ones and iron spearheads. On the contrary, in the eleventh century B.C. bronze was the normal metal, iron was new and uncommon, limited to special uses, so its limitation to the point of a spear is understandable.<sup>8</sup> Would an author writing four hundred years later know these facts? That seems unlikely. The accuracy of the account of Goliath in such a detail, suggests that it is a reliable report of an event in the eleventh century B.C. throughout.

The same holds for the iron bedstead of Og, king of Bashan, and for the iron chariots of the Canaanites; the material of which they were made would not be worthy of comment unless it was unusual. Iron in the Late Bronze Age was known and used in small quantities, but it was rare and costly, so would invite attention.<sup>9</sup>

Another 'blatant anachronism' the same writer discerned in the books of Samuel is the use of coined money. He cites two passages. The first sets the prices for refurbishing agricultural tools at two thirds or one third of a shekel, 'Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines said, "Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!"' So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their ploughshares, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened. The price was two thirds of a shekel for sharpening ploughshares and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing-goats' (1 Sam. 13:19-22). The second passage is Joab's offer of ten shekels of silver to the man who saw Absalom hanging by his hair from a tree and the man's reply that one thousand shekels would not persuade him to kill the king's son (2 Sam. 18:11-12). In Hebrew the first passage mentions neither shekels nor silver, having only 'the price was two thirds (*pym*) ... one third (*shlsh*)'. The second passage has 'ten of silver' and 'one thousand of silver'. The Hebrew text does not include the word for 'shekel', a linguistic feature (ellipsis) also common in business transactions of the second millennium B.C. in the Levant at Alalakh and Ugarit, at the latter site both in Akkadian and in Ugaritic texts.<sup>10</sup> The shekel being the basic unit of currency across the ancient Near East, there was no need to mention it in every case, it was understood, whereas other units, such as the talent, were named.

Payment was made by weighing the silver, as the man expressed to Joab, 'Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands ...' An earlier passage is very specific, Genesis 23:16, 'Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according

to the weight current among the merchants'. Hoards of silver bullion have been recovered from various sites in the Holy Land and elsewhere, made up of pieces cut from rings, ingots and lumps. There are no grounds at all for assuming that coinage, which did not appear until the seventh century B.C. at the earliest, was envisaged in either passage in the books of Samuel.

In contrast, books dealing with the Persian period do have references to coined money. Ezra and Nehemiah speak of thousands of drachmas of gold given for restoration work in Jerusalem (Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70,71). 1 Chronicles 29:7 reports that the leaders of Israel gave to David 5,000 darics for building the Temple. While this is, strictly, anachronistic, it is intelligible that a book written in the Persian period should use a current denomination.

The use of shekels, their multiples and their fractions as units of currency, silver weighed, not coined, was normal across the ancient Near East. Inscribed Hebrew stone weights of the seventh century attest a standard system, perhaps introduced by Hezekiah. Among the weights are some for  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a shekel, marked *pym*, the word found in 1 Samuel 13:21 as the price the Philistines charged for sharpening Israel's iron tools. (The Hebrew of that verse was unintelligible until the discovery of weights marked *pym* a century ago.) To allege that use of fractions implies coined money and so is an anachronism is without any justification at all; fractions of the shekel are normal in cuneiform documents from the early second millennium B.C. onwards. The occurrence of the Hebrew weights marked *pym* in the seventh century only does not imply the unit had no earlier existence as a weight.<sup>11</sup>

Through the middle decades of the last century there was a widespread opinion that texts from various sites showed that the activities of the Patriarchs fitted well with the social customs of the second millennium B.C. Accordingly, the narratives in Genesis could be treated as reflecting that time. The consensus was challenged in 1974 and 1975 by the books of T.L. Thompson and J. van Seters.<sup>12</sup> Those publications have formed the basis for a new consensus that the lives of the Patriarchs cannot be treated as reflections of the second millennium B.C., but rather of the first, consequently they are not historical but fictitious, for the biblical chronology places them before Israel's settlement in Canaan. Although a volume of essays and various other studies have renewed the case for a second millennium dating, taking into account the arguments of Thompson and van Seters,<sup>13</sup> their views have gained widespread acceptance. This is a case of failure to allow adequately for alternatives. The arguments from the ancient documents rest mainly on the fact that behaviour similar to that of the Patriarchs is attested in the first millennium B.C. That could only tilt the balance toward a first millennium date for the Genesis traditions if such behaviour were proved to be impossible in the second millennium. That is not the case. It is inevitable that pastoral nomadic families, like Abraham's, living in the same regions and under comparable conditions, should conduct their lives in similar ways throughout the centuries, even the millennia,

until the arrival of motorised transport and electricity. When there are similarities between texts of the second and the first millennia B.C. and the accounts in Genesis, it may be advisable to associate the Hebrew narratives with the earlier date in preference to the later because the biblical texts themselves imply the earlier date.

### **Should Archaeology have Priority?**

The preference given to the later date for the Patriarchal Narratives is the result, of course, of adherence to the source analysis of the Pentateuch which places no texts earlier than 1,000 B.C. That is one of the main tenets underlying the recent book by the Tel Aviv archaeologist Israel Finkelstein and the writer Neil Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*<sup>14</sup> Building upon the assumption that the book of Deuteronomy was the Book of the Law found in the Temple in the days of king Josiah, about 620 B.C., and that it had been written only a few years earlier, they believe none of the Hebrew books written in the same style can be older and so the books of Kings, for example, do not preserve reliable reports of events in previous centuries. That is an assumption which can be challenged. There is no good reason to limit the so-called 'deuteronomistic style' to the seventh century or later. The style could have originated in a much earlier century and be maintained for long afterwards. Assyrian royal inscriptions give clear examples of that process. The 'annals' of Tiglath-pileser I (c. 1114-1076 B.C.) are written in a style which is little different from the style of the 'annals' of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal written four centuries later, and other kings' annals of the intervening centuries show the same features. Those are not only stock phrases and formulae, but include the ideology of kingship and the theology of Assyria. Among the most important aspects is the concept of the faithfulness of the parties to a treaty. Many examples of treaties drawn up by Hittite kings of Anatolia from the sixteenth to the thirteenth centuries B.C. survive which have as their main purpose the maintenance of good relations between the Hittites and their neighbours and allies in Turkey and Syria.<sup>15</sup> Although there are no Assyrian treaties from that period, the Assyrian royal inscriptions reflect them. The loyalty of the treaty partners would result in peace and prosperity, with assurance of mutual aid in times of trouble. Breach of the treaty by a junior partner would result in a punitive attack by the superior one, who might remove him from his throne and exile or execute him. Now if the authors of Assyrian royal propaganda and of Hittite treaties could conceive these possibilities, then a Moses of the thirteenth century B.C. could do the same. The continuity of the ideas and the style in Assyria over several centuries until the fall of the kingdom (the Hittite empire disappeared soon after 1200 B.C.) offers a good analogy for the continuity of the 'deuteronomistic style' over several centuries in Israel, even if the language was modernised.

Finkelstein and Silberman began with another proposition beside the literary assumption, a proposition based upon archaeological research, for they wish to give priority to archaeological discoveries in writing a history of Israel. It is necessary to observe that extensive exploration and excavation has taken place in the Holy Land over the past 150

years, yet, unhappily, no royal inscriptions have been found like those of Assyria or Egypt. In fact, inscriptions on stone are rare, not one is known bearing the name of a king of Israel or of Judah. There are scores of ostraca, inscribed potsherds, carrying short messages in Hebrew which are valuable evidence for daily life and administration, but say nothing about kings or major events. Dating ruined buildings and other remains unearthed in the tells of Israel and Judah depends ultimately upon correlations with historical records in other lands, or in the Bible. The distinction between pottery of one stratum and pottery of another can yield a relative sequence, not a precise chronology. Now Finkelstein argues that the Philistines with their decorated pottery did not settle in Philistia until after the reign of Ramesses VI (c. 1143-36 B.C.), whereas most scholars suppose that they took root there at least fifty years earlier. The decorated pottery, which belongs to a second phase of their occupation, he supposes began to become fashionable early in the eleventh century and continued in use into the tenth century. That means the subsequent strata, which do not have that pottery and which are currently set in the eleventh and tenth centuries, should be attributed to the late tenth and the ninth centuries.<sup>16</sup> The strata that would then fall in the tenth century present rather meagre material, implying that there was no major power in the land, no great kingdom such as the Bible describes for David and Solomon. Regrettably, the book by Finkelstein and Silberman arising from the hypothesis about Philistine ceramics sets out these ideas as assured facts, as the final verdict. Other archaeologists of equal experience with Finkelstein reject his ideas.<sup>17</sup> The debate continues, but the hypothetical nature of the situation has to be recognised. Finkelstein's ceramic chronology appears to be too rigid, expecting identical forms to change at the same moment at every site.<sup>18</sup> His contention that the Philistines did not settle in the south-west of Canaan until late in the twelfth century is very dubious. We note that Ramesses III already depicted the 'Sea People' moving with wagons and families through the Levant before 1175 B.C., so they could already have been settling there at that time, if not earlier. Finkelstein's arguments lead to the dating of the famous six-chambered gateways at Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo to the ninth century B.C., contradicting Yigael Yadin's dating to the time of Solomon. While many would be sad to see supposed evidence for Solomon's building work disappear, were the case watertight, there could be no objection to it. As it is not conclusive, those gates may still be attributed to the middle of the tenth century B.C., that is, to Solomon's reign.

### **The Lack of Evidence for David and Solomon**

Excavations in Jerusalem have failed to unearth any structures that can be credibly linked to Israel's two most famous kings. Some may express surprise at the absence of any monuments to David or Solomon. First, it is necessary to observe that there is still a city of Jerusalem, so only certain areas can be excavated and in some parts the actions of previous generations have removed all earlier remains down to bedrock. The most extensive archaeological work has been done along the flanks of the 'City of David' or

‘Ophel’ hill where the slopes are so steep that much of the debris of early cities will have rolled down the hill or been swept away by later builders. Second, it is pertinent to record that there are very few West Semitic inscriptions of kings in the Levant from the tenth century. The only ones known come from the port city of Byblos. One is the funerary inscription of king Ahirom, incised on the lid of his sarcophagus and found in his tomb. The others all relate to the temple of the ‘Lady of Byblos’, but only one was found in situ. These inscriptions name six kings of Byblos, all to be placed between about 1,000 and 880 B.C. Many other kings ruled in the towns of the Levant during those years, yet no original inscriptions survive from any of them. The absence of inscribed monuments of David or Solomon is not surprising and cannot be used to prove they were powerful kings, local chieftains, or fictional figures. As I have remarked before, the total absence from Palestine of monumental inscriptions of King Herod does not reveal anything about the extent of his power.

The existence of king David is now supported by evidence from outside the Bible. Fragments of a stele inscribed in Aramaic were found at Tel Dan in 1993 and 1994.<sup>19</sup> The shapes of the letters suggest a date between 850 and 800 B.C. The text recounts a victory won by a king whose name is lost, but who was very likely Hazael of Damascus, and who claims the god Hadad supported him. He boasts of the defeat of a king of Israel whose name may be restored as [Jeho]ram son of [Ahab]. That name is followed by another which has been restored as [Ahaz]jah, son of [Jehoram], that is, the king of Judah. There are strong reasons for expressing uncertainty about that restoration; only the ending of the king’s name, *-yahu* (= *-iah*) remains on the stone and the father’s name is lost and the resulting syntax would be peculiar. The most significant letters stand at the start of the ninth line: *k.bytdwd*. The first letter belongs to the last word of the previous line, which is missing; the frequently offered restoration ‘king’ (*[m]k*) is doubtful. The next six letters spell ‘House of David’. The formulation, ‘House of X’, was frequently used to designate a dynasty in Assyrian and Aramaic in the early first millennium B.C., the personal name being the name of the founder of the dynasty, so there is no reason to doubt that the reference here is to the ruling house in Jerusalem, founded by David. It is very unlikely there was another ruling house of that name in the Near East at that time and other explanations offered, some of them deliberate attempts to avoid the clear sense of the inscription, have little support.

‘Archaeology and the Bible: friends or foes?’ - these few examples are intended to illustrate different ways in which archaeological discoveries may be related to the biblical text, how wrong deductions can easily be made, how other presuppositions affect the interpretations placed upon the discoveries and how much attention needs to be paid to every facet of each topic. The material remains, the walls, utensils, pottery vessels can never provide precise information; the wall cannot proclaim ‘King Y built me’, nor the sword declare the name of its smith, nor the pot the year it was formed. These things are neutral, neither friends nor enemies. It is the texts that bring the precision the

historian seeks. Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions supply exact details about several episodes recorded in the books of Kings and it is a remarkable fact that in each case where they name a king of Israel or a king of Judah, the names occur in the same sequence and at the same chronological points as they do in the Hebrew text. The extra-biblical witnesses agree with the biblical. Further, wherever extra-biblical texts report the same events as biblical texts, they are harmonious; there is no case of downright contradiction. (A recent attempt to demonstrate disagreement between biblical and extra-biblical texts has been proved to be faulty, based upon insufficient knowledge of the sources.<sup>20</sup>)

The conclusion is clear, the Bible and archaeology are not enemies, they are, rather, friends. It is misguided interpretations that make them appear to be hostile to each other.

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6. 'Were the Israelites really Canaanites?' in J.K. Hoffmeier & A.R. Millard, eds, *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*, Grand Rapids Eerdmans (2004) 136-48.
7. D.B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1992) 305.
8. Bronze scale armour was found at Nuzi, R.F.S. Starr, *Nuzi* (1930) 475ff, mentioned in texts and discussed by T. Kendall, 'gurpišu ša aweli: The Helmets of the Warriors at Nuzi', in M.A. Morrison, D.I. Owen, eds., *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians in Honor of Ernest R. Lacheman*, Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns (1981) 201-31; illustrated in Egypt, see Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson (1963) 196-97. Iron scale armour was found at Nimrud, see M.E.L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains* (London: Collins (1966) 409-11; D. Stronach, 'Metal Objects from the 1957 Excavations at Nimrud', *Iraq* 20 (1958) 169-81, especially 172-74. Bronze scales were found at Lachish in the level associated with Sennacherib's attack, see D. Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib*, Tel Aviv Institute of Archaeology (1982) 55-56.
9. See my essays 'King Og's Bed and other Ancient Ironmongery' in L. Eslinger, G. Taylor, eds., *Ascribe to the Lord, Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (1988) 481-91 and 'Back to the Iron Bed: Og's or Procrustes?'' in J.A. Emerton, ed., *Congress Volume, Paris 1992, Vetus Testamentum Supplement 61*, Brill: Leiden (1995) 193-203.

10. D.J. Wiseman, *The Alalakh Tablets*, London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara (1953), see p. 13, e.g. nos. 66-68, 70-72, 93, 100; e.g. C. Viroilleaud, *Textes en cunéiformes alphabétiques des Archives Est, Ouest et Centrales, Palais Royal d'Ugarit 2*, Paris: Klincksieck (1957), no.6, lines 13, 14; no. 18, line 21; J. Nougayrol, 'Textes Suméro-accadiens des Archives et Bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit' in C.F.A. Schaffer, ed., *Ugaritica V*, Paris: Geuthner (1968) no. 27, lines 8, 12ff; no. 51, lines 9, 12; no. 86, line 16.
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12. T.L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: the Quest for the Historical Abraham*, Berlin: de Gruyter (1974); J. van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1975).
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14. I. Finkelstein & N. A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*, New York: Free Press (2001).
15. Many are translated in G. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, Atlanta: Scholars Press (2nd ed. 1999).
16. Finkelstein first presented his hypothesis in 'The Date of the Settlement of the Philistines in Canaan', *Tel Aviv* 22 (1995) 213-39 and 'The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: an Alternative View', *Levant* 28 (1996) 177-87.
17. A. Mazar, 'Iron Age Chronology: A Reply to I. Finkelstein', *Levant* 29 (1997) 156-67; A. Ben-Tor, 'Hazor and the Chronology of Northern Israel: a Reply to Israel Finkelstein', *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 317 (2000) 9-16, and more recent papers in various journals.
18. See S. Ortiz, 'Deconstructing and Reconstructing the United Monarchy: House of David or Tent of David (Current Trends in Iron Age Chronology)' in J.K. Hoffmeier, A.R. Millard, eds., *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*. Grand Rapids; Eerdmans (2004) 121-47.
19. B. Mazar, J. Naveh 'An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan', *Israel Exploration Journal* 43 (1993) 81-98, 'The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment' *Israel Exploration Journal* 45 (1995) 1-18; A. Millard, 'The Tell Dan Stele' in W.W. Hallo & K.L. Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture 2. Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, Leiden Brill (2000) 161-62.
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## Foreign Words in the Old Testament - Clues to Dating?

T.C. Mitchell

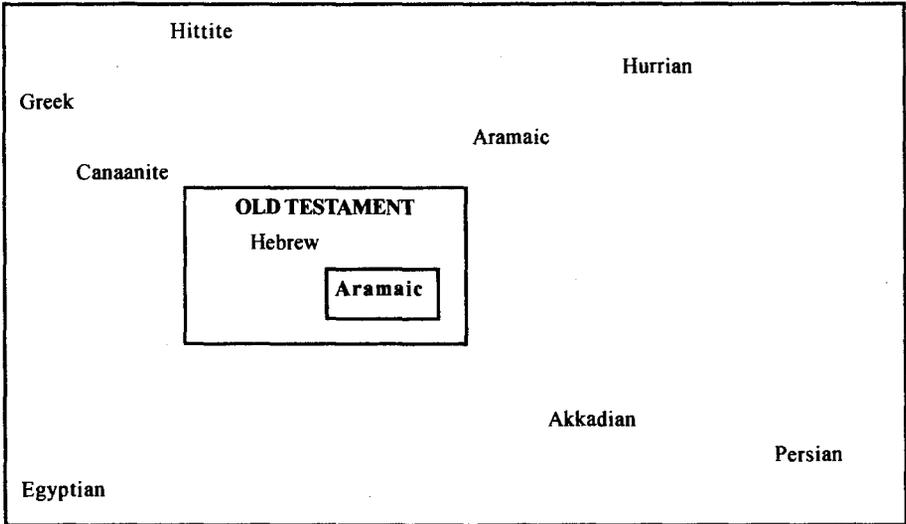
Since the advent of the so-called "Higher Criticism" of the old Testament, one of the issues to come forward has been the dating of individual books and parts of them. The main trend in this was to conclude that many parts of the Old Testament were written much later than a plain reading of their own statements would suggest. One of the elements brought into the discussion to support views of late dating, particularly of the later books, has been foreign loanwords in biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic.

A well-known statement of a century ago concerning this issue in relation to the book of Daniel is the dictum of S.R. Driver that "The verdict of the language of Daniel is thus clear. The *Persian* words presuppose a period after the Persian empire had been well established: the Greek words *demand*, the Hebrew *supports*, and the Aramaic *permits*, a date *after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great (B.C. 332)*".<sup>1</sup> Driver, in spite of the fact that he was very much influenced by the higher criticism of the time, was a careful scholar, and his statement is in fact somewhat more moderate than some views held today.

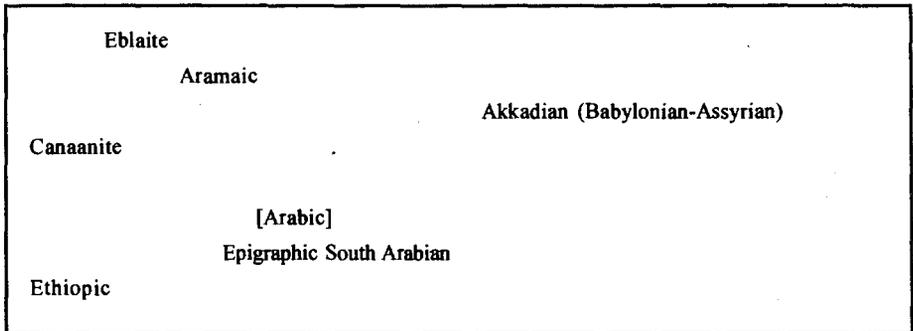
In fact the position is very much more complicated than was understood in Driver's time, and this should be taken into account today. The ancient Hebrews, once they had settled in Palestine near the end of the second millennium B.C., occupied an area with speakers of different languages around them. These languages are known from inscriptions or deductions from later texts. The Old Testament is largely in Hebrew, but has limited passages in Aramaic in Jeremiah (one verse: 10:11), Ezra (4:8 - 6:18; 7:12 - 26) and Daniel (2:4 - 7:28), and these have loanwords from several other languages.

Over a century and a half of archaeological discovery has shown that there was settled life in the Near East from at least 8000 B.C. onwards, but inscriptions which can indicate what languages were spoken in the area do not occur until a little before 3000 B.C., and in fact do not give a really clear phonetic representation of any language until well into the third millennium. The main languages which are significant for the Old Testament can be shown in graphic form, where the Old Testament, mainly in Hebrew but with a small part in Aramaic, is shown in the middle rectangle, and the others in more or less their geographical directions around them. The inscriptional evidence of the second and first millennia show that there were certain major language areas associated with dominant or resilient cultures, notably Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian) and Egyptian, each of which is represented by a very large body of written evidence which goes back to the third millennium B.C. and continues into the Roman period. The West Semitic language group, to which Hebrew itself belongs, is represented by Canaanite and Aramaic, both known from inscriptions in the first millennium B.C. and illuminated by the related Ugaritic of the second millennium. Other significant languages of the

second millennium are Hittite, and also Hurrian, represented by a more limited body of texts. The main contribution of loanwords to the dating of Biblical books is found in the first millennium B.C., when two languages, Old Persian and Greek, are known from inscriptions, the latter only touching marginally upon Old Testament matters.



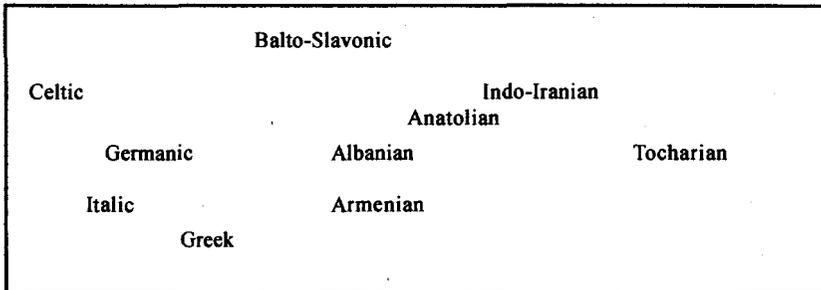
These languages are known because they are found in surviving inscriptions, and in some cases from much later manuscript sources, but it is likely that there were many more in peripheral areas of which no detailed record survives, and others in the form of minority languages, perhaps of what might be called substratum groups, in central areas. It is clear, for instance, that Median was a distinct Old Iranian language, related to Old Persian, but it is known only from personal and perhaps place names. In fact Old Persian itself is only known from monumental inscriptions which make up a very limited corpus.



Of these languages, Akkadian, and the West Semitic group, which included Cananite and Aramaic, all belong to the same extensive Semitic family, now well known, particularly together with the evidence of Arabic (shown here in square brackets because, apart from isolated passages in Nabataean inscriptions of the Roman period, it is only fully attested more recently from the period of the Qur'an in the 7th century.A.D. and onwards)

It is generally agreed now that the Semitic languages belong on a wider view together with Egyptian, to what is referred to as the Afro-Asiatic or Afrasian group.

Another great language group, referred to as Indo-European, includes Hittite, Greek and Old Persian, shown here in a chart in something like their geographical relationships to others of the language family. In it, Hittite belongs to the Anatolian, and Old Persian to the Indo-Iranian group, and among the others, the Germanic group includes English and Italic includes Latin.



The other main languages, Sumerian, Hurrian and Elamite, do not belong to large families of this kind, and are not well enough attested to be so fully known.

Societies in contact with others frequently borrow words, most often nouns, for objects, institutions etc., not known to them. These are referred to as loanwords. Their presence in a text can sometimes give an indication of the date of its composition. Of course, not every loanword gives an indication of the date when it was borrowed, but some do, and these inadvertently, so to speak, provide valuable information. A manuscript text in English, for instance, which included the word *mulligatawny*, a Tamil word meaning "pepper water", only borrowed when trade with the Indian Ocean had developed, would clearly not be earlier than the eighteenth century A.D., and in fact the earliest occurrence found by the Oxford English Dictionary is 1784. It will not occur for instance in any play of Shakespeare, who died in 1616.

Just as an educated English speaker can recognize that such words as *mulligatawny* or *algebra* are foreign in origin, the Semitic and Indo-European language groups are now sufficiently well-known for specialists to be able to tell whether particular forms are native or likely to be foreign to them. This is a significant element in the recognition of

loanwords, but has to be used with care because no ancient script represents the sounds of the languages it records in the way a modern scientific phonetic transcription would aim to do. This is particularly true of the cuneiform script which provides inadequate representation of gutturals and the distinctions between ordinary and emphatic consonants.

Care has to be taken in assessing the significance of loanwords between languages when they belong to the same general family. Many of those relevant for the ancient Near East and Biblical studies belong to the Semitic group. The Semitic languages as set out in the table above are all presumed to have derived from a common hypothetical original, usually referred to as Proto-Semitic. Languages change over time. Today only those who have studied it can understand Old English (and even Chaucer, who wrote in Middle English, is difficult [he died in 1400]), and conversely, my grandparents would not have understood such words as “radio” or “television”. This process of change means that if populations divide and migrate to different geographical areas, the gradual linguistic changes lead to local dialects and then to distinct languages. A well-known example of this is seen in Europe where Latin developed into the Romance languages, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese etc. It is generally accepted that Latin belonged to the much larger Indo-European linguistic group, and in the same way the Semitic languages are, as already mentioned, generally accepted as having descended from a hypothetical Proto-Semitic language.

This means that members of the family share many words which go back to earlier times. For example the forms *bītu* in Akkadian, *bayit* in Hebrew, *bayt* in Arabic etc., all meaning “house”, go back to Common Semitic (German *Gemeinsemītische*). In other words, in this example, Hebrew *bayit* is not a loanword from Akkadian *bītu*, but both go back to a common original, perhaps with some such meaning as “dwelling”. It is therefore necessary in considering words found in two different languages of the same family to distinguish between those which go back, for instance, to Common Semitic and have been in each language since the third millennium or earlier, and those which have been borrowed more recently by one language from another.

Another complication arises from the fact that in some instances a word was borrowed from the mother language by way of a third. In the Old Testament, while most of the Persian words were borrowed directly into Biblical Aramaic, those in the Hebrew passages probably came by way of Aramaic.

An example from the early period which has not come directly from the original language but via an intermediary is *heykal*, “palace, temple”. This derives ultimately from Sumerian *é-gal*, “big house”, either via Akkadian *ekallu*,<sup>2</sup> or, since it is found with initial *h-* (*hkl*) already in the 14th century B.C. at Ugarit, possibly via some West Semitic language or dialect. It is possible that the Sumerian word-sign (logogram) *é* had an inherent *h*-like element, perhaps originally having been phonetically something like *hē*,<sup>3</sup> or perhaps *h̄ē*, but the fact that Ugaritic and Hebrew transcribe the word with an initial *h-* while Akkadian

does not, may not be so significant because the cuneiform writing system does not always represent an initial weak *h*.<sup>4</sup> This illustrates a limitation of the cuneiform writing system. The phonetic values of cuneiform signs were deduced in the early years of decipherment on the basis of comparison of Babylonian and Assyrian words with those that matched them in cognate languages such as Arabic, and to a lesser extent Hebrew, which have a wider range of characters representing different sounds. This knowledge of the range of consonants in the other Semitic languages led to the deduction that in the cuneiform inscriptions the consonants /ʾ/, /h/, /h/, /ʾ/ and /ġ/ are not represented at the beginnings, and only to a limited extent in the middle of the words.<sup>5</sup>

An example of another early loanword, in this case from Hittite, or at least well attested in Hittite texts but possibly borrowed into Hittite from Hurrian, is found written *a-a-bi* in the cuneiform script, possibly to be normalized as *aiabi*, which occurs in contexts suggesting some such meaning as “sacrificial pit”. It can be connected reasonably with Hebrew *ʾôb*, usually taken to mean something like “spirit”, but plausibly in the Old Testament having something of the meaning “hole in the ground” in such a passage as I Samuel 28:8 where Saul seeks to call up the witch of Endor.<sup>6</sup> Since the Hittite texts in which this word occurs date from the second half of the second millennium B.C., there is no problem in seeing it as a loan into West Semitic, where it is possibly also found in Ugaritic in the form *ilib*, which could be analyzed as *ʾil-eb*,<sup>7</sup> “spirit (*ʾil*) of the pit (*ʾeb*)”, at about the same date (in an area of Syria much dominated by the Hittites) and by that route, or less likely directly, into Hebrew. Samuel records events of the 11th and 10th centuries B.C., and the presence of this word would be entirely consonant with that.

The main languages with which Hebrew and Aramaic came into contact in ancient times were Akkadian, Egyptian, Persian and Greek.

### **Akkadian**

Of these languages, the evidence of Akkadian is not very significant for dating because the Hebrews could have had contact with it, either directly or indirectly, from before the time of Abraham onwards. Later Akkadian texts, however, supply evidence of a different kind in that loanwords from other languages in the very large corpus of cuneiform texts and which are also found in the Old Testament, can give information on the dates at which they arrived.

### **Egyptian**

Egyptian, like Akkadian, is known in a large body of texts over a long period in which the currency of some words in different periods can be seen. An example of a loan from Egyptian is *šs*, “flax, linen”, attested from the third millennium B.C. onwards,<sup>8</sup> which appears in Hebrew as *šēš* with the same meaning. It occurs in Genesis, Exodus (in the description of materials associated with the tabernacle), Proverbs and Ezekiel, or in terms of dating, it was characteristic of Classical Biblical Hebrew. It was replaced in Late

Biblical Hebrew by the quite different word *bûš* (the forerunner of the Greek term *bussos*, “fine linen”), which occurs in the later Biblical book of Chronicles, and continued into the post-Biblical Mishna and the Aramaic Targums (paraphrases of Old Testament passages).<sup>9</sup> Greek *bussinos*, “made of *bussos*” is found already in Herodotus in the 6th century B.C. (Histories 2:86; 7:181), and is generally regarded as a loanword from Semitic.<sup>10</sup> Whatever the origin of this word, this illustrates another obvious point, namely that a word can have been in a source language well before it is borrowed by another. As far as the Old Testament is concerned, however, the occurrence of *šēš* or *bûš* could be an indication of Pre- or Post-Exilic date.

For the occurrence of a loanword in a text to provide a reliable clue to the date of the document, it would be necessary ideally to have complete evidence of the lending languages through the periods covered by the Old Testament. As already mentioned, something near to this exists for Akkadian and Egyptian, though in each case there are some periods not well represented, but the evidence from other relevant languages is incomplete. The fact that there are gaps in the evidence of surrounding languages, however, does not mean that they were not there.

### Hebrew

Before summarizing this evidence, however, it is desirable to have a look at the evidence on which our knowledge of the Hebrew language is based.

In considering this evidence it is necessary to distinguish between actual dated written evidence in the form of inscriptions or manuscripts (only one early Hebrew papyrus has survived, from Murabba’at on the Dead Sea) a substantial number of which are known particularly from the 10th to 7th centuries BC and the presumed dates of bodies of literature known only from later manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> There are not many significant Hebrew inscriptions from the period of the Exile.<sup>12</sup> There is an important document of the second century B.C. in the form of a scroll of part of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) from Masada,<sup>13</sup> which provides valuable evidence of the language at that period.<sup>14</sup>

The other important manuscript source which includes material in both Hebrew and Aramaic is, of course, the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran, which give examples of both Biblical and sectarian Hebrew from the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.,<sup>15</sup> and examples of every-day Hebrew are found in the letters, of about 130 A.D., from the Bar Kokhba caves near the Dead Sea.<sup>16</sup>

This is all inscriptional evidence, but for knowledge of both the complete Old Testament and of Rabbinic literature resort has to be had to medieval copies, in which it is necessary to reckon with the exigencies of scribal transmission.

The Hebrew of the Old Testament (which apart from the evidence of the Biblical manuscripts from Qumran depends on medieval manuscripts not earlier than the ninth century A.D. and mostly later) has a superficial appearance of uniformity because the

text, which was transmitted for some centuries with no indication of vowels, and then with only limited indication (/y/ for *e* and *i*; /w/ for *o* and *u*; and /h/ and /ʿ/ for *a*,<sup>17</sup> was supplied with vowels in the mid-first millennium A.D. by means of marks (dots and strokes above, below and inside the consonantal characters) introduced by the Jewish scholars known as Masoretes, and though genuine oral traditions may well have been preserved by this means,<sup>18</sup> these traditions are unlikely to have kept exact distinctions in spelling characteristics of different phases of the pre-Exilic language.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, certain features of grammar and vocabulary are generally agreed to indicate that the main body of Old Testament literature is pre-Exilic, that is to say predates the fall of Jerusalem in 597 and 586 B.C., but it is also generally agreed that certain books, notably Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Esther and Daniel, are in late or post-Exilic Biblical Hebrew. In linguistic terms the two main phases, before and after the Exile of the 6th century B.C., may be designated Early (or Classical) Biblical Hebrew and late Biblical Hebrew, the terminal date of Late Biblical Hebrew being a matter of debate.

The other great body of early Hebrew literature, again known from later manuscripts, is in the Talmud, consisting of the Mishna, compiled in the early part of the Christian Era as a result of the work of the Tannaim, or repeaters of the oral traditions of Rabbinic Judaism, together with the explanations of the Amoraim, or expositors of the Mishna, separately recorded in Palestine and Babylonia, preserved in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds.<sup>20</sup> This phase of Hebrew, generally known as Mishnaic, arguably goes back to colloquial Hebrew sources contemporary with the more literary Late Biblical Hebrew. One corollary of this overlap is the probability that when Biblical words and constructions are otherwise attested only in Mishnaic Hebrew this does not necessarily mean that this is a mark of late date, possibly instead being carry-overs from earlier colloquial speech.<sup>21</sup>

In sum therefore it is generally agreed that Biblical Hebrew can be divided into two main periods, Classical or Pre-Exilic, and Late or Post-Exilic, the change having taken place in the sixth century, the time of the Exile, and this is reflected by the fact that forms typical of both periods appear in the book of Ezekiel which is a book of the Exilic period.<sup>22</sup>

As already demonstrated by the quotation from S.R. Driver, one of the books particularly involved in the question of loanwords is Daniel. There are Akkadian loanwords in it, but these are not surprising in a book claiming to derive from Mesopotamia. They do not bear on the question of date. It is clear that it is written in Late Biblical Hebrew, but the question is: How late?

### **Aramaic**

The situation concerning Aramaic is more complex than that for Hebrew in view of the much more extensive range of evidence, arising from the widespread use of Aramaic in the Near East from the first half of the first millennium B.C. onwards, and its use as the *lingua franca* of the Achaemenian Empire and it must have been spoken as a separate

language since well before 1000 B.C. A considerable number of inscriptions are known, the earliest substantial example, that of Hadad-yis'i from Tell Fekheriveh, dating from the 9th century B.C.<sup>23</sup> Various chronological schemes have been proposed for the Aramaic language, and I have adopted that according to which Old Aramaic runs from the earliest inscriptions until about 700 B.C., Official Aramaic, otherwise known as Imperial or Reichsaramäische, until 300 B.C., Middle Aramaic until about 200 A.D., and finally Late Aramaic up to the coming of Islam in the 7th century A.D.<sup>24</sup> Beside chronological divisions, there were also regional dialects, and the distinctions between these are still under study, so it is unwise to reach dogmatic conclusions on the basis of the evidence at present available.

For Official or Imperial Aramaic, as a result of its use in the wide geographical area of the Achaemenian empire, the evidence includes a number of inscriptions on stone and other hard materials,<sup>25</sup> as well as a small number of epigraphs on cuneiform tablets of the 7th century B.C.,<sup>26</sup> but of particular importance a number of papyri,<sup>27</sup> leather documents,<sup>28</sup> and ostraca,<sup>29</sup> of the 5th and 4th centuries mainly from Egypt, particularly Elephantine. It is nevertheless worth reflecting that considering the amount of written material that must have existed in Aramaic in the 6th, 5th and 4th centuries B.C., the surviving corpus is really rather limited.

For Middle Aramaic, the form of the language used in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, there is a considerable body of inscriptional evidence, in particular in documents from Qumran, Murabba'at, the Bar Kokhba caves, and a number of ossuary and funerary inscriptions from Palestine,<sup>30</sup> as well as Palmyrene, Nabataean, Hatraean and some early Syriac inscriptions,<sup>31</sup> and Aramaic logograms in Parthian and Sasanian inscriptions from Iran and central Asia,<sup>32</sup> in which, for instance, the phrase *šāhān šāh*, "king of kings", is written *mlk'n mlk'*, that is the words written in Aramaic with the termination *-n* indicating that it was to be read in Iranian. This is partially analogous to someone reading an English text aloud who, when he comes to the abbreviation "i.e." which stands for Latin *id est*, will interpret it as "that is" (though many today have turned this into a word in its own right, "eye-ee").

Study of these inscriptions shows that certain changes took place over time, for example the common noun for "earth, ground, land," etc. which occurs in Hebrew in the form *'eres* (as in *'eres yiśrā'ēl*, "Land of Israel"), was written as *'rḳ* (with *q* instead of *š*) in Old, and frequently in Imperial, Aramaic, but as *'r'* (with *'ayin* in place of *q*) already in papyri of the first half of the 5th century, and this latter spelling, or variations of it, became the norm in Nabataean, Palmyrene and later dialects. The later form with *'ayin* occurs consistently in Daniel, as in the papyri, but interestingly the single verse in Aramaic which occurs in Jeremiah (10:11) has both spellings, side by side so to speak, suggesting a transitional situation in the late 7th century B.C.<sup>33</sup>

This is a point tangential to loanwords, but I bring it in because the changes which take

place in languages over time are significant. That instance shows that the question can be complicated. This is clear also from an often cited example, the relative pronoun “which”, which in general is found as *zī* in early but *dī* in late contexts, and always occurs as *dī* in Daniel. While the most common form in the papyri of the Achaemenian period is *zī*, there are several instances of the later *dī* in the fifth century texts,<sup>34</sup> and there was a considerable period of overlap. In this context it has been pointed out that a spelling change such as this from *z* to *d* could well have been simply a matter of later scribal updating, a change analogous to that found in the spellings used for instance in printed English versions of the New Testament between that of William Tyndale published in 1526 and that of a nineteenth century edition of the Authorised Version, in which the text relied heavily on that of Tyndale. These two versions of Matthew 24:15-18 can be set out in interlinear form,<sup>35</sup> where there are also minor changes in the vocabulary, but the differences in spelling are clear.

When ye then shall se the abominacion and desolacion	(spoken of by Daniell the
When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the	
prophet stonde in the holy place: whosoever redeth it, let hym understonde it. Then let	
prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let his understand).	Then let
them which be in iury flye into the mountaynes. And lett hym whych is on the	
them that be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the	
houssetoppe, not come doune to take enytinge out of his housse. Nether let hym	
house-top not come down to take anything out of his house;	Neither let him

Another factor in this particular issue is that in some cases an earlier spelling of a word may continue to be used when the pronunciation has changed, the point being that if a spelling in Biblical Aramaic is closer to that found in later outside documents, this may mean only that the Biblical spelling represents the pronunciation of the 6th-5th century while the spelling in documents of the same date may have carried over, unchanged, earlier forms without keeping up with pronunciation changes. An analogous instance in English is found for example in the word *island* where the consonant *s*, which was pronounced in the forerunner Latin *insula*, is silent in modern pronunciation.

As already mentioned, Aramaic is known from inscriptions from the 9th century B.C. onwards, and must have been spoken in parts of the Near East well before that. The Aramaeans were related to people referred to as Ahlamu, who are already mentioned in texts in the 17th century B.C. This may be reflected in Genesis where Laban, who could be placed in the early 2nd millennium B.C., is referred to as an Aramaean (Gen. 28:5; 31:20) and he is said to use the Aramaic term Jeger Sahadutha (*yēgar śāhādūtā*) to refer to the place known to the Hebrews as Gilead (*gal'ēd*; Gen. 31:47; otherwise usually *gil'ād*).

Daniel is a book much fought over, many claiming that it is to be dated in the 2nd century B.C., as against its own internal indications that it comes from the 6th-5th centuries B.C. In this connection Drivers's quotation refers to two other languages in particular which bear on the question of date, namely Persian and Greek, from which there are loanwords.

In considering at what stages of these different languages it is reasonable to place the book of Daniel, the situation is not so straightforward as it is for English, for instance, where evidence exists for most of the stages from Old English to modern times, exhibiting features of grammar and vocabulary against which documents that are not self-dating can be matched.

### Iranian

While there are historical gaps in the evidence of the Iranian languages, this does not mean that they were not spoken. In considering our knowledge of the ancient Iranian languages. It is appropriate to stress that the important body of Iranian religious literature, the Avesta and its related compositions, is known, like much of the Hebrew and Aramaic evidence, only from medieval manuscript sources, likewise following long periods of oral and scribal transmission. The oldest extant manuscript of the Avesta dates from 1288 A.D.<sup>36</sup> The text preserved in manuscripts of this kind largely reflects a version settled under the Sasanians in the 4th century A.D., and such presumed early strata in it as the "great" yashts and the Gathas have only been singled out by careful philological analysis.<sup>37</sup>

Actual contemporary Old Iranian evidence consists of the relatively limited Old Persian corpus,<sup>38</sup> and loanwords in Akkadian and Elamite cuneiform texts.<sup>39</sup> As already mentioned, traces of the contemporary Median language are limited.<sup>40</sup>

For Middle Iranian there are the Parthian,<sup>41</sup> Pahlavi,<sup>42</sup> Sogdian,<sup>43</sup> Khwarazmian<sup>44</sup> and Khotanese<sup>45</sup> texts, but the latter three represent evidence from rather far afield, since Sogdia and Chorasmia were in the area formerly known as Soviet Central Asia, and Khotan even further in Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang).<sup>46</sup> The evidence for Khwarazmian is in any case very sparse. These last three languages are known from manuscripts found by Aurel Stein and others. They illustrate the scattered and incomplete nature of the evidence.

As might be expected, Iranian loanwords in Babylonian texts are found mainly in the 5th and 4th centuries, the Achaemenian period, when most texts were still written in Akkadian, but there are one or two debated instances of earlier examples which suggest that dogmatism is out of place. The word *aspastu* in a list of plants in the garden of Marduk-aplu-iddin in the early 7th century B.C.<sup>47</sup> could be analysed as Iranian *asp-ast*, "fodder for horses", an etymology only doubted because of the early date; and an otherwise unexplained form *bit aspatu*, "house of aspatu", in a text of the late 6th century, which might be seen as a miswritten example of the same word, is again rejected

only because of the early date. Another possibility in a Neo-Assyrian latter of the 7th century B.C. is the word *kurangu*, perhaps meaning “rice”, which may be an Iranian loanword before the Achaemenian period.<sup>48</sup> *Aspaštu* and *kurangu* are both plant names and could have come in with the commodities themselves, a reflection of a common situation concerning loanwords, that they will be the names of new things, functions etc., for which there are not already words in the receptor language. They are a further indication that it is sensible to keep an open mind. The point of this is that if there were Persian loanwords in Akkadian already in the 7th century B.C., there is no problem in finding them in the 6th-5th centuries B.C. in such Biblical books as Daniel and Ezra.

Another instance of a foreign word is found in Esther, a book relating to the 5th century B.C. We think of cotton as a fairly modern textile, but it is likely that it is referred to in Esther (1:6), in a passage describing the garden enclosure of Xerxes at Susa. The text is rather obscure, but it can be translated “the garden had hangings of white and blue cotton”,<sup>49</sup> where the word rendered “cotton” is *karpas*, a hapax legomenon (i.e. occurring only once in the Old Testament). It is very probably an Indo-Iranian loanword, as indicated by Sanskrit *karpāsa*, “cotton”,<sup>50</sup> presumably having come into Persian from the east. Evidence has been found at Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus Valley for the use of cotton already in the third millennium B.C.<sup>51</sup> It is even possible that a 7th century B.C. reference to “trees that bear hair/wool” in Sennacherib’s account of his building operations may refer to cotton plants. Sennacherib says that these were clipped and “shredded for garments”, very appropriate to cotton,<sup>52</sup> but this can only remain a speculation. Many would argue that the book of Esther is not earlier than the 2nd century B.C., but the occurrence of this word cannot be taken as an indication of post-Achaemenian date.

Over a hundred Iranian loanwords are found in the Aramaic inscriptions of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., a few of which occur in the later inscriptions from Hatra, but very few in Palestine and no clear examples in Nabataean.<sup>53</sup> There are also Iranian loanwords, often different, in Aramaic texts of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, particularly in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Mandaean and Syriac. It is possible to some extent to distinguish chronological linguistic strata in this evidence,<sup>54</sup> the loanword *rāz*, “secret”, for instance, from Iranian (probably Median) *\*rāza*,<sup>55</sup> which occurs in the book of Daniel (2:18), is not actually attested in texts of the Achaemenian period, but it found in most later Aramaic dialects and can be presumed on the basis of this wide distribution to have been borrowed already in Achaemenian times.<sup>56</sup>

There are a number of other Iranian loanwords in Daniel, here shown in a chart where the entries are arranged in general subject order. Many of them are the titles of officials, not unexpected when a new group of people has assumed rule. Some of these occur also in Ezra, in both books mostly in the Aramaic passages, but some are found in the Hebrew parts of these books, probably borrowed, as already mentioned, via Aramaic, and also in Esther and more sparsely in Chronicles and Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth).<sup>57</sup> The

dearth of actual contemporary texts of the Old Iranian period thus means that Iranian forerunners of loanwords have to be reconstructed hypothetically to a considerable extent on the basis of later Iranian texts.<sup>58</sup> Some of the loanwords are possibly Median rather than Persian, but there is no problem about that since the Medes preceded the Persians in power. One probable instance of this distinction could explain the difference between \**gizbār*, “treasurer”, in Ezra, from Median \**ganzabara*, and \**gēdābar*, “treasurer”, in Daniel (3:2,3), from the Persianised form \**gandabara*.<sup>59</sup>

The general picture emerging from the Iranian evidence in which the cuneiform texts and the Aramaic inscriptions show substantial numbers of Iranian loanwords in the 5th and 4th centuries, and other evidence that words not attested until after the Achaemenian period were nevertheless probably borrowed at that time,<sup>60</sup> suggests that the book of Daniel fits plausibly into this period, and that on this basis a late 6th or 5th century date is possible.

### Greek

The other language of significance in relation to the late Biblical books, specifically Daniel, is Greek. That Greek was spoken in the Aegean area already in the 15th-13th centuries B.C. is shown by the Mycenaean Linear B texts.<sup>61</sup> Following that early evidence, and a gap of some centuries, there are a large number of alphabetic inscriptions from the 8th century onwards,<sup>62</sup> and important evidence from papyri, dating from the 3rd century to Islamic times, principally from Egypt.<sup>63</sup> The main body of Greek literature covers the periods from the 8th century B.C. onwards - that is the literature which formerly played a major part in British higher education - is known, however, largely from medieval manuscripts,<sup>64</sup> the product of generations of scribal copying, and therefore vulnerable to errors in transmission.

It is generally agreed that there are three Greek loanwords in Daniel (3:5 etc.), all of them names of musical instruments: *qaytērōs* from *kitharis*, “lyre”, *pēsantērīn*, from *psalterion*, possibly another kind of lyre, and *sūmpōnēyā*, from *sumphonia*, or probably *tumpanon*, “tambour”.<sup>65</sup> It is appropriate to place these Greek words against the context of the fact that there was a considerable Greek presence in the Near East by the 6th century B.C. There are for instance a number of references to individuals from the Greek world in Babylon in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Men from the “land of Ionia” (*ia-manna-a-a*) are mentioned among others including Lydians from Western Asia Minor, as receiving official rations in Babylon, in the so-called Weidner tablets, an archive of cuneiform texts excavated at Babylon, which also mention the exiled Judaeen king Jehoiakin as a recipient of rations.<sup>66</sup> While to the Babylonians in the 6th century, Ionia cannot be assumed to have been simply “Greece”, Greek colonists had been established in Ionia since well before this time, so it is reasonable to take “Ionia” as referring to the area of Greek culture.<sup>67</sup> The same place-name, *yāwān*, is used in reference to Greece in the book of Daniel (8:21; 10:20; 11:2). The indications of date provided by Greek words

in these passages are not precise, but they do show that they are quite consonant with the situation in the 6th-5th century B.C.

These are a few considerations showing that the occurrence of foreign words in the Old Testament can indeed be clues to dating, and in relation to the much debated date of the Book of Daniel, while the study of the evidence continues, they are indicative of the conclusion on present evidence that the Hebrew and Aramaic of Daniel with the Persian and Greek loanwords in it are not inconsistent with a date in the early Achaemenian period, that is to say in the 5th century B.C., making use of earlier material from the 6th century. The late dating often proposed is based to a large extent on unwillingness to accept the existence of predictive prophecy.<sup>68</sup>

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