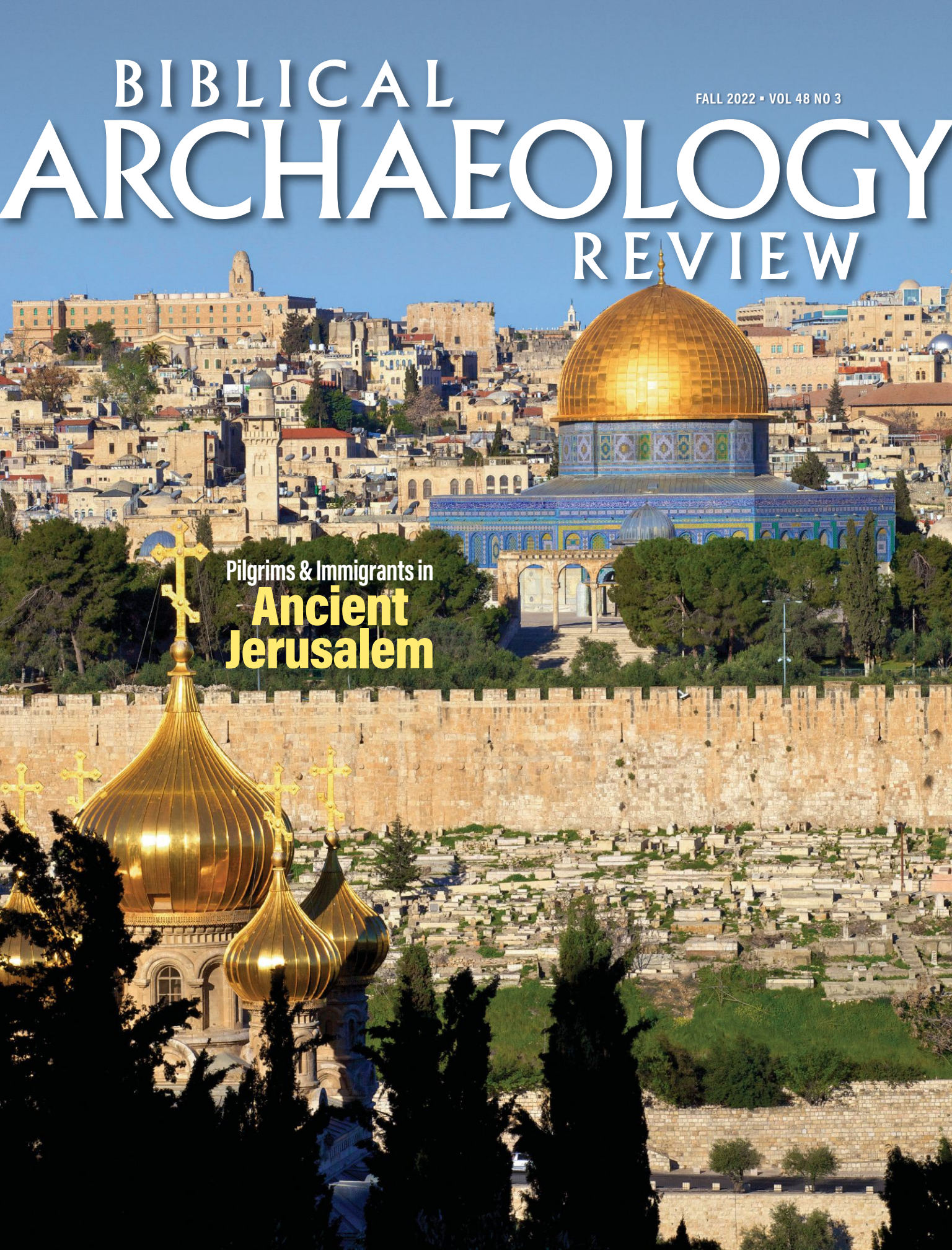
FALL 2022 ▪ VOL 48 NO 3

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW



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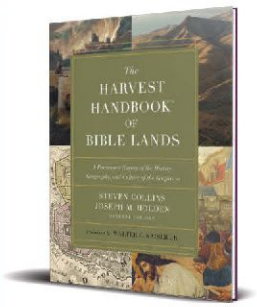

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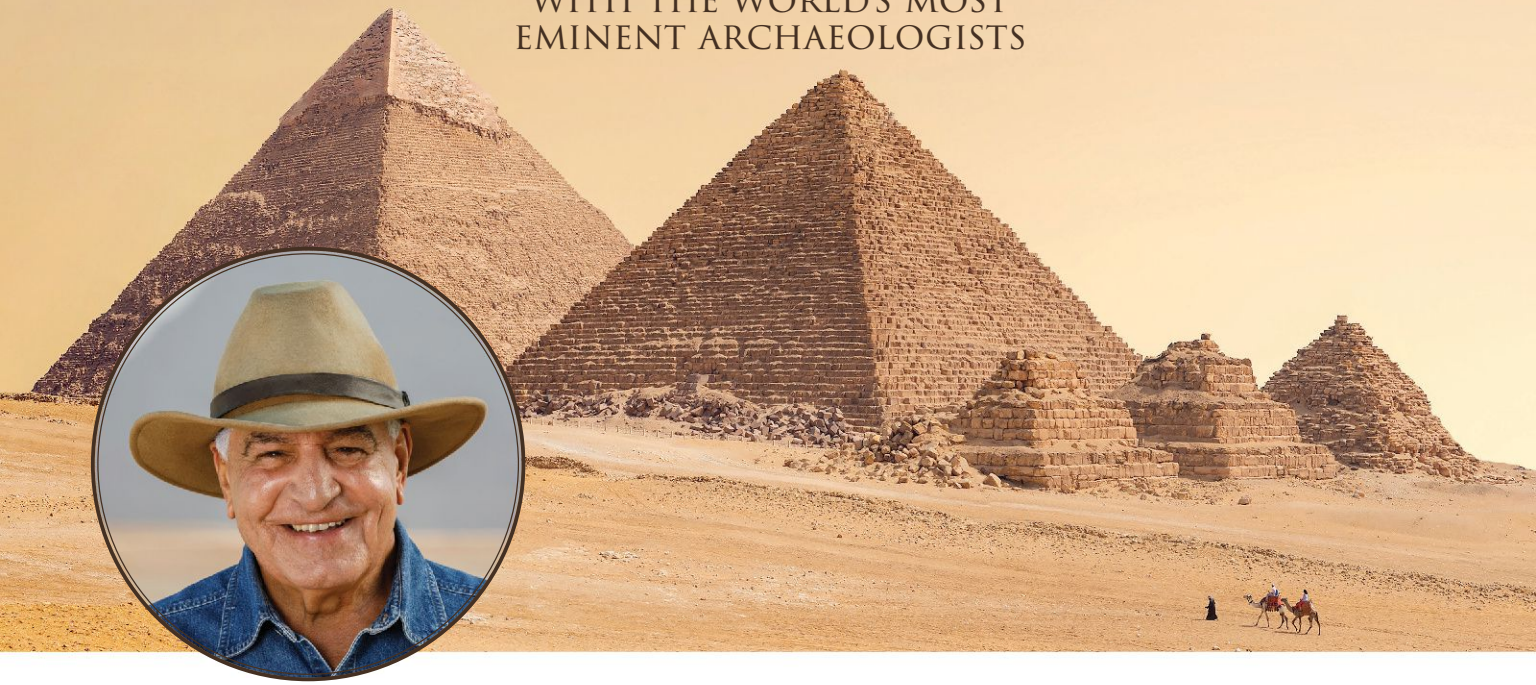

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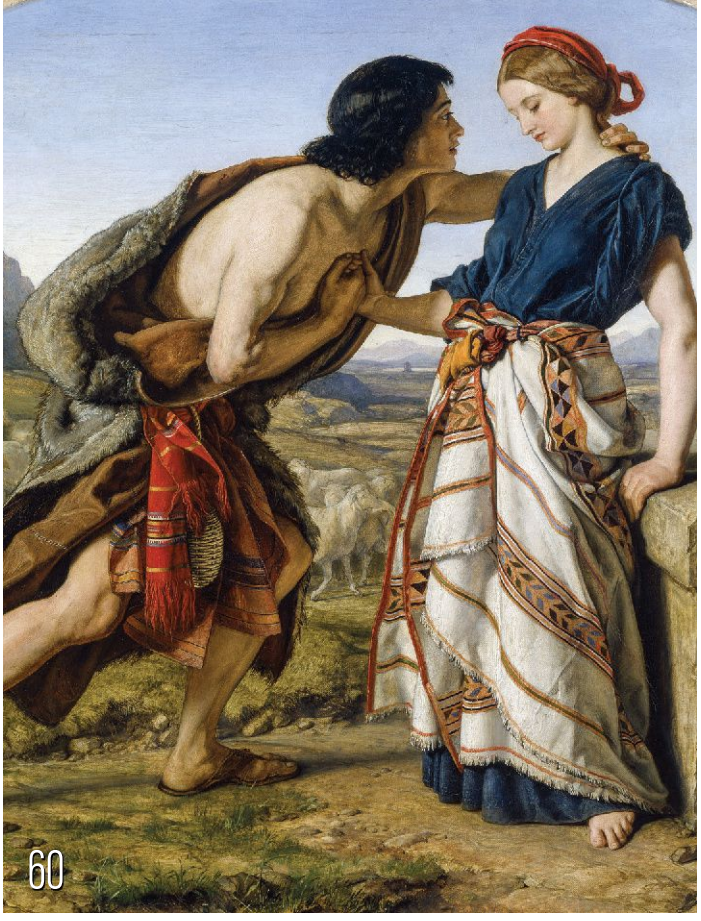
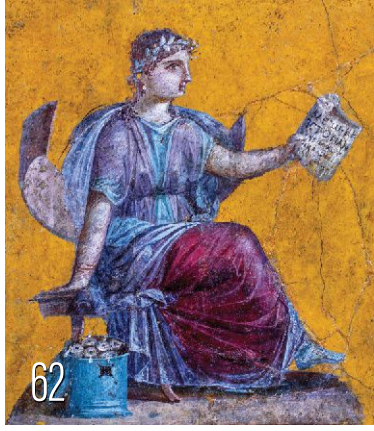
VOL. 48 NO. 3
FALL 2022

FEATURES

ON THE COVER: Then as now, Jerusalem was home to diverse communities in the first century C.E. Monuments, texts, and burials shed light on the city's population. In this photo, taken from the Mt. of Olives, the Dome of the Rock, the ancient Temple Mount platform, the Church of Mary Magdalene, and some burials are visible.

PHOTO: JON ARNOLD IMAGES LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO





STRATA

EPISTLES

PLUS

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The Dead Sea Scrolls: Past, Present, and Future

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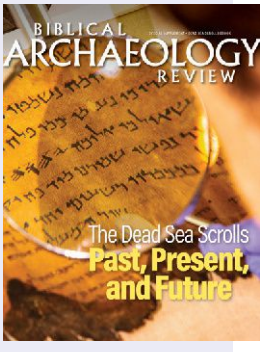

This year is the 75th anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls' discovery. To mark the occasion, we offer a new eBook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Past, Present, and Future*. It brings together articles and interviews with the world's leading experts on the scrolls. Receive your free copy today!

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There's something new from BAS all the time on *Bible History Daily*. Visit **biblicalarchaeology.org/blog** for the latest news, reviews, and more.

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Passing the Torch

BAR HAS WITNESSED SEVERAL IMPORTANT TRANSITIONS over the past few years, and this issue marks yet another. Susan (Sue) Laden, the magazine's longtime Publisher and the guiding force behind the Biblical Archaeology Society (BAS), is stepping back after nearly five decades of service to the organization (see p. 12). Her role now passes to her son Jonathan Laden, who has been BAS's Chief Financial Officer since 2019 and has worked for BAS for the past 15 years.

Sue, along with the late Hershel Shanks and Sue Singer, created a rich legacy of publication excellence, making **BAR** the world's top-selling magazine on biblical archaeology. Now it falls to us, **BAR**'s next generation, to carry on that legacy and grow the magazine and the society for the future.

This next step in **BAR**'s journey begins with our Fall issue, which includes all of the engaging, informative, and thought-provoking content our readers have come to expect. In the article "Yahweh's Desert Origins," archaeologist Juan Manuel Tebes reexamines centuries-old questions about the origins of Israel's God and the archaeological and biblical evidence that suggests Yahweh first emerged in the desert lands south of Judah. In her article "Journey to Jerusalem," Jodi Magness reviews the compelling evidence—from texts to tombs—for the many Diaspora Jews and foreign proselytes who made Jerusalem their home during the time of Herod the Great and his successors.

In their fun and instructive article "Taking a Sling," Boyd Seevers and Victoria Parrott reveal the tools and methods of ancient slingers and the effectiveness of such a simple weapon in David's defeat of the more heavily armed Goliath. And in "Magdala's Mistaken Identity," historian Joan Taylor offers a critical look at how an ancient Jewish port city on the Sea of Galilee came to be wrongly identified with the hometown of one of Jesus's most famous disciples, Mary Magdalene.

In Strata, we continue to mark the 75th anniversary of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls with two fascinating columns that reveal the latest developments in scroll research. First, Årstein Justnes and Signe Hægeland attempt to unravel the mystery of thousands of scroll fragments that have gone missing since their original discovery. Mladen Popović then details how researchers use artificial intelligence technology to identify different scribal hands among the scrolls. Moving on to our latest Site-Seeing column, Jonathan Klawans takes us on a tour of Tel Dan in northern Israel, a site renowned for both its biblical ruins and breathtaking beauty.

Epistles offers important context for key biblical figures and episodes. Kristine Henriksen Garroway highlights the ancient Near Eastern legal background to the complicated marriage agreements made between Jacob, Leah, and Rachel in the Book of Genesis. Robyn Faith Walsh invites us to consider the Gospel writers not simply as eloquent spokespersons for early Christian belief but rather as trained biographers and storytellers who were well versed in the literary conventions of their day. Finally, in Text Treasures, we celebrate the Rosetta Stone, the famed commemorative stela that allowed Jean-François Champollion to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs 200 years ago this September.

Periods of transition always come with mixed emotions. While there is a certain anxiety about moving on from the familiar, there is also tremendous anticipation for what comes next. As **BAR** looks to the future, we are humbled to inherit the remarkable legacy of the magazine's founders but also excited to explore new and creative ways to bring the world of biblical archaeology to our devoted readers.

—GLENN J. CORBETT

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW

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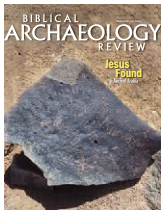

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and comments about our Spring 2022 issue. We appreciate your feedback. Here are a few of the letters we received. Find more online at **biblicalarchaeology.org/letters**.

Expanding My Mind

AS A JUDAIC ARTIST, I am grateful to **BAR** for expanding my knowledge of Judaic art and interest in Jewish studies. When I attend Shabbat services, I often have **BAR** right next to my Torah because it provides a broader perspective on the biblical text and rabbinical commentaries. I now include paleo-Hebrew letters in my visual creations. As I stare at this ancient writing, I think, "Was this how King Solomon wrote the Song of Songs?" Thank you for expanding my experience of the Bible and enriching my creative world.

AVY ASHERY
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

Piece by Piece

I WONDER if the references to Caphtor in Amos and Jeremiah (Daniel Master, "Piece by Piece: Exploring the Origins of the Philistines," Spring 2022), and the fact that they would survive after five centuries, is related to the Israelites' fear of the sea. Could the Israelites have feared the Philistines more than others because, having come from across the sea, they were considered to be a mightier people than, say, the Egyptians, who often came by land?

STEVE BAHRT
NORTH MANCHESTER, INDIANA

DANIEL M. MASTER RESPONDS:
I don't see any evidence that the Israelites feared the Philistines more than they did the Egyptians. And although I do agree that the Iron Age highland kingdoms of Israel and Judah lacked expertise in seafaring, I believe that if anyone remembered Caphtor, it would have been the Philistines, not the Israelites. Finally, when Amos and Jeremiah use the geographical term, they are hardly remembering the 12th century B.C.E. directly. Rather, I think they are telling us what they know about Philistine memories as told by the Philistines of the eighth and seventh centuries.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

Write us at letters@bib-arch.org or **BAR** Editorial, 5614 Connecticut Ave NW #343, Washington, DC 20015. Please include your full name, city, and state. While we welcome all reader comments, we are unable to reply to or publish every letter we receive. Published letters may be edited for clarity and readability.

Proof Positive

I WAS FASCINATED to read Frankie Snyder and Rachel Bar-Nathan's article ("Proof Positive: How We Used Math to Find Herod's Palace at Banias," Spring 2022) about there being a Herodian banquet hall (triclinium) at this beautiful and mystical site. Their reconstruction of the hall's elegant floor and its possible connections to Herod's triclinium at Jericho, all based on tiles collected 35 years ago, conjures images of Indiana Jones commiserating with Sherlock Holmes. All this brought a question to my mind: Are there similarities between those two triclinia and the lavish, Herodian double triclinium and fountain just outside the Western Wall in Jerusalem?

MAHLON MARR
PEORIA, ARIZONA

SNYDER AND BAR-NATHAN RESPOND:
Triclinia at all three locations share the same basic architectural design and purpose (audiences, meetings, and festive meals). The monumental building by the Western Wall of the Temple Mount had two (possibly three) triclinia that offered impressive views and a fountain, but it did not have opus sectile *floors.*

Silent Labor

I WANT TO THANK **BAR** for including the article "Silent Labor: Dig Workers in the Middle East" and the notice of the "Unsilencing the Archives" online exhibit sponsored by the Badè Museum (both Strata, Spring 2022). Both help redress the lack of public acknowledgement and awareness of the important roles played by local Middle Easterners on excavations going back over a century.

JEFFREY R. ZORN
ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY
CORNELL UNIVERSITY
ITHACA, NEW YORK

Biblical Judge

I WAS SURPRISED by Yosef Garfinkel's assertion ("Name of Biblical Judge Surfaces," Spring 2022) that "taken together with the biblical evidence" the discovery of the names Jerubba'al and Eshba'al "contribute to our understanding of the naming practices in Judah during the time of the judges." To me, this is quite a leap. Finding the names on pottery only indicates that the names are old and from the era to which the pottery is dated. It does not say anything about either the time of King David or the time of the judges, as

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if those two eras are established historical fact. The existence of King David is by no means certain, and the so-called time of the judges is a narrative that was likely written in the late seventh century B.C.E., which mitigates against its historical accuracy. I believe that we should resist perpetuating assumptions that give the biblical record more credence than it warrants.

RABBI RON STERN
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

YOSEF GARFINKEL RESPONDS:

While we apparently disagree on some historical interpretations and terminology, it is remarkable that the name Jerubba'al was found in an early 11th-century context and the name Eshba'al appears on a tenth-century jar and that these attestations correspond chronologically with the historical periods as portrayed in the Bible.

Mt. Sinai and the Red Sea

THANK YOU for the interesting article by Barry J. Beitzel ("A Sea Change? Finding the Biblical Red Sea," Spring 2022). I wonder about the location of Mt. Sinai given on the article's map, which places the mountain in the south of the Sinai Peninsula. To my knowledge, the location of Mt. Sinai is disputed and some consider a location in the Arabian Peninsula to be a better candidate. Since northwest Arabia is even farther east than the Sinai, an Arabian location for Mt. Sinai would not contradict Beitzel's position of where the Exodus happened and could, indeed, be the correct one.

GUNNAR EIDMANN
THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS

BARRY J. BEITZEL RESPONDS:

The Arabian theory, with which I disagree, is precisely why I wrote Where Was the Biblical Red Sea? *(Lexham Press, 2020). Scholars, including reviewers of the book, agree that the location of the Exodus was in close proximity to the Nile Delta and that Mt. Sinai was located on the Sinai Peninsula.*

*For more on competing ideas on the location of Mt. Sinai, see p. 37.***—ED.**

Cairo Geniza

THE CAIRO GENIZA article (Spring 2022) contains a mistake. You seem to equate Judeo-German with Yiddish. This is not so. Yiddish is a combination of old German and Hebrew and was a language that was not understood by 19th-century German Jews. By contrast, Judeo-German was German written in Hebrew letters. I have over 3,000 pages of journals written between 1817 and 1871 that were in Judeo-German. As I translated the journals, I was able to use a German dictionary to find words I did not know. Each letter in German had a specific Hebrew equivalent. The practice of writing in Judeo-German probably died out in the late 1800s.

ARLINE SACHS
SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA

There is ambiguity in linguistic vocabulary related to Yiddish and Judeo-German. While "Judeo-German" often refers to texts in the German language written in Hebrew script, it can also mean a specific language (or dialect), Yiddish. In our context of listing different

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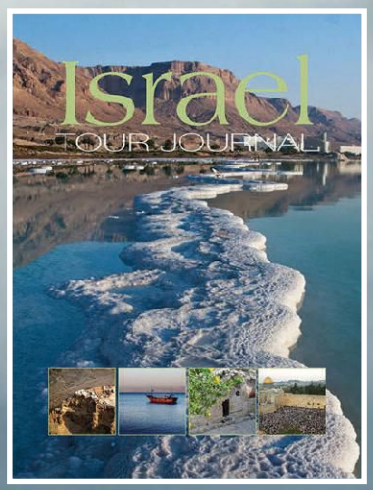

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languages attested in the geniza, the equation between Yiddish and Judeo-German is not incorrect, though perhaps clarification was needed.—ED.

David and Goliath

AS I WAS PORING OVER "Plate with the Battle of David and Goliath" (Spring 2022), a couple of questions arose. First, in the top panel, why is the person seated interpreted as "a personification of the river that provides David stones for his sling," and not as King Saul? It seems to me that if this were a personification, there would be stones represented, as there are in the bottom panel. Could the figure seated between David and Goliath be King Saul, stylized by the Byzantine motif of a scepter—held in the right hand—topped by a proto-fleur de lis, a symbol of royalty? Secondly, what is the purpose of the snake figure in the bottom panel?

KAREN ARENCIBIA
MORRISON, COLORADO

In line with classical iconography, the sitting figure is surely a personification of the river: a half-naked person pouring water from a jug. Interestingly enough, the set of silver plates, to which this one belongs, includes one with a depiction of David appearing before enthroned King Saul and another one showing Saul arming David. In both scenes, King Saul appears as a bearded man dressed in elegant garments.—ED.

PHOTOS: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF J. PIERPONT MORGAN, 1917

I AM A WEAVER, so I always scrutinize photos of statues, carvings, and paintings to see what ancient fabrics may have looked like, since fabrics rarely survive the centuries. I was thrilled to see the David Plate—not for the clothing but for David's sling. In the bottom panel, what looks like a snake slithering away is exactly what slings in Peru and the Andes look like today. There is a loop at one end to help you hang onto the sling when you let the projectile fly. The other end is tapered to make it easier to let go. And the middle is wider and flatter, often with a tiny slit, to hold the projectile. It's amazing how the sling has changed so little over the centuries.

BERNA LOWENSTEIN
ORLANDO, FLORIDA

What looks like a snake in the bottom panel is indeed a depiction of an ancient sling. For an overview of slinging in the ancient world, see the article by Seevers and Parrott in this issue.—ED.

DAVID ROBERTS

ARTIST AND TRAVELER

JOHN OLBRANTZ

David Roberts (1796–1864) was a self-taught Scottish painter who rose from the depths of poverty and obscurity in Edinburgh to become one of the most celebrated artists of his generation, a member of the Royal Academy, and a painter whose works can be found in some of the most distinguished public and private collections in Europe and America. He is best known for the travelogue of Egypt and the Holy Land that he produced with lithographer Louis Haghe from sketches he made during a nine-month trip to the region in 1838–39.

Art historian and Hallie Ford Museum of Art Director John Olbrantz explores the life and works of this important Orientalist painter who was the most accomplished architectural and topographical painter of his day.

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Above: David Roberts, in collaboration with Louis Haghe, ***Petra*** (Al-Khazna) (detail), March 6, 1839, in *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt, and Nubia*, vol. 3, 1842–49, Royal Subscription Edition, handcolored lithograph, collection of Ken and Linda Sheppard. Above right: Robert Scott Lauder, ***David Roberts in Arab Dress***, 1840, oil on canvas, collection of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland, purchased 1980, PG 2466.

Celebrating BAR Publisher Susan Laden

SUSAN (SUE) LADEN has stepped back from her role as Publisher of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (**BAR**). She will continue to direct special projects as a senior advisor and serve as President of the Biblical Archaeology Society (BAS).

Sue was the society's first employee, hired in 1976 by **BAR**'s late founding editor, Hershel Shanks, to take a part-time job opening envelopes on her kitchen table. She jokes that her biggest contribution to BAS in the early years followed that fateful moment when **BAR**'s entire mailing list (then about 4,000 subscribers) fell off a truck and was lost. Sue not only had retained outdated papers that everyone else would have long since discarded, but she had the presence of mind to make sense of them and so was able to reconstruct most of the list.

HERSHEL SHANKS

Susan Laden at Rabbi Obadiah Bertinoro's tomb in Israel.

As the society's needs grew, Sue grew alongside. When the organization needed more than kitchen-table flexibility, Sue researched how to grow a small publishing company and connected with executives at National Geographic, Smithsonian, *Christianity Today*, and elsewhere. Synthesizing those varied sources and more, she built a professional organization that handles operations, marketing, sales, and service on a level that has always exceeded its size.

At various times in its nearly 50-year history, BAS has supported four magazines (**BAR**, but also *Bible Review*, *Archaeology Odyssey*, and *Moment*, all of which were published simultaneously for several years), a merchandise program, study tours and seminars, book publishing, fundraising, and more. Sue's management of all of these moving parts has been a big part of the magic that has allowed BAS to thrive.

Sue has managed a staff of dozens, worked with consultants, and negotiated terms with some of the country's largest fulfillment houses and printers. She initiated, maintained, and grew sophisticated marketing, fulfillment, and renewal efforts for **BAR**, while also spearheading all of the society's other initiatives.

In 1994, Sue left BAS, returning in late 2003 to reprise her role as Publisher. Within a year, she became the organization's President, the only other person besides Hershel to have that role. Hershel and Sue maintained a contentious but warm relationship for almost five decades, friends who always challenged each other, each enabling the other to accomplish more than they would otherwise.

In the nearly two decades since, Sue has continued to oversee BAS, finding a steady path through many challenges. Following Hershel's retirement in 2017, she also hired the only other two editors **BAR** has ever had.

Sue Laden, and the organization she built, has supported **BAR** and the other activities of the society for nearly 50 years through rapid growth and occasional bumps in the road. Thanks to her tireless dedication, BAS is well positioned to continue its mission to share the fascination of the archaeology and peoples of the lands of the Bible for 50 years to come.

Thank you, Sue, for a job well done!

Cursed by Yahweh?

IN MARCH, A RESEARCH TEAM led by scholars from the Associates for Biblical Research (ABR) announced the discovery of a lead tablet from Mt. Ebal that contains a Hebrew inscription. They say the inscription, dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age (c. 1200 B.C.E.), is a curse text that invokes the deity Yahweh. The team believes the tablet to be the oldest extant Hebrew inscription. Questions abound, however, and some scholars have expressed doubts about the team's sensational claims.

The tablet comes from the West Bank site of Mt. Ebal, first excavated by archaeologist Adam Zertal in the 1980s. Zertal interpreted the site to be the location of Joshua's altar (Joshua 8:30).* The tablet was recovered only in 2019, however, when the ABR team began to sift the soil dumps from the Mt. Ebal excavation.

*Adam Zertal, "Has Joshua's Altar Been Found on Mt. Ebal?" **BAR**, January/February 1985.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL C. LUDDENI / © ASSOCIATES FOR BIBLICAL RESEARCH

The folded lead tablet from Mt. Ebal.

The lead tablet, which measures less than 1 square inch, appears to have been folded in half after being written. It was readable only with advanced digital scanning, which was carried out by the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. Although images of the scans have not been released, the ABR team says that the inside contains 40 letters written in four lines of text. As translated by the team, the tablet reads: "Cursed, cursed, cursed—cursed by the God *Yhw*. You will die cursed. Cursed you will surely die. Cursed by *Yhw*—cursed, cursed, cursed." The team believes the inscription may directly connect to the covenant renewal ceremony on Mt. Ebal, described in Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8.

Some scholars remain skeptical about the tablet's contents, however, since the team has provided very little written or visual documentation to support their reading. As Christopher Rollston, an epigrapher from the George Washington University, notes, "I would predict that almost all of the readings posited [by the team] will be vigorously contested, once scholars in the field of epigraphy are allowed to see the image." The ABR team says it plans to publish a peer-reviewed article on the find later this year.

IMAGE HERCULES MILAS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

WHERE IS IT?

1. Venice, Italy
2. Istanbul, Turkey
3. Caesarea, Israel
4. Paris, France
5. Chios, Greece

ANSWER ON P. 26

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High Tech Romans

Through January 15, 2023
Landesmuseum
Mainz, Germany
landesmuseum-mainz.de


Roman aqueduct at Segovia.

MAURITIUS IMAGES GMBH / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

"WHAT HAVE THE ROMANS ever done for us?" A question famously asked (and answered) in Monty Python's *The Life of Brian*. As **BAR** readers well know, the answer is actually quite a lot. A new exhibit, titled *High Tech Romans*, aims to showcase the resourcefulness and originality of the Romans, as well as the lasting impact of their technologies up to the modern day.

All across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, the remains of great Roman-era building projects are visible testaments to the technologies that emerged and proliferated under Roman influence and rule. For example, a theater in Caesarea Maritima—first constructed by Herod the Great in the first century B.C.E—is still used for shows in Israel today. Likewise, a first-century Roman-era aqueduct in Segovia, Spain, still carries water into the city, and elements of the ancient sewer in Rome, the *Cloaca Maxima*—originally constructed in the sixth century B.C.E. and renovated in the third century B.C.E.—has remained in continuous use (see p. 21).

Roman innovations, such as underfloor heating, concrete, road networks, and advanced water systems, continue to amaze and inspire. While some of these technologies, such as concrete, were lost for centuries, others remained functional and in use after the fall of the Roman Empire. The Landesmuseum exhibit allows visitors not only to learn about Roman inventions but also to try them out for themselves with several hands-on activities, making it an exceptional experience for young and old alike.

Biblical Kings Drank Vanilla Wine

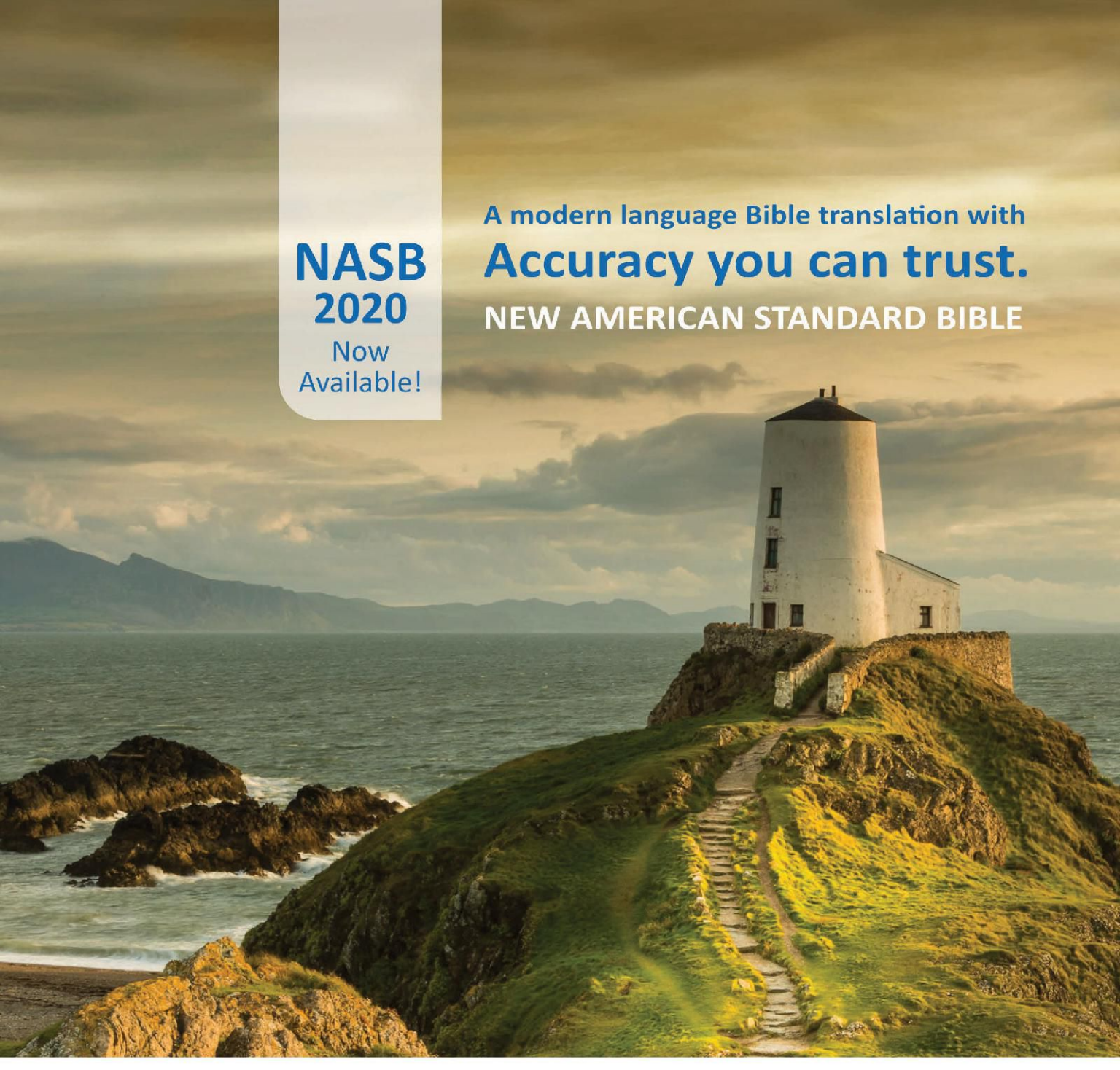
IN THE DAYS OF THE BIBLICAL KINGS, wine flavored with vanilla was a hit. According to a recent study by the Israel Antiquities Authority and Tel Aviv University, the kings of biblical Judah infused their wine with this luxury spice. The study demonstrates Judah's wealth and power right before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.


Jerusalem wine jars.

COURTESY DAFNA GAZIT, ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

As vanilla was not grown in the Levant or ancient Near East, it may have arrived from India or tropical Africa, likely via the trade routes that passed through the Negev, Arabia, and beyond. Finding traces of vanilla in Iron Age Jerusalem is a remarkable discovery, but it is not the first time that such exotic spices have been found in the lands of the Bible. Vanilla was also identified in burials from the Canaanite city of Megiddo and cinnamon at the Phoenician site of Tel Dor. Researchers now believe that vanilla may have been grown and traded in Africa or Asia millennia before its discovery in the New World, long thought to be the world's original source of vanilla.

The evidence of vanilla-infused wine was discovered in two separate excavations within the City of David. In both cases, excavators had uncovered large wine jars within buildings destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. The team conducted chemical tests on eight of the jars. The tests identified the molecular remnants of various liquids and ingredients that had been preserved on the interiors of the vessels. As expected, they confirmed that the jars had been used to store wine. Surprisingly, the tests also showed that the wine had been infused with vanilla—and that several jars had been reused multiple times to store wine or other liquids, such as olive oil. These findings indicate the complexity of ancient Judah's economy and the biblical kings' sophisticated system for the collection and redistribution of goods.



The NASB 2020 is an update of the New American Standard Bible 1995 that further improves accuracy where possible, modernizes language, and improves readability. These refinements maintain faithful accuracy to the original texts and provide a clear understanding of God's Word to those who prefer more modern English standards.

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Neolithic Shrine

COURTESY SOUTH EASTERN BADIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

Two anthropomorphic figures (on left and right, above) discovered inside a Neolithic ritual complex in southeastern Jordan.

WHILE EXCAVATING ANCIENT Neolithic hunting traps in Jordan's southeastern desert near the site of Jibal al-Khashabiyeh, a team from the French Institute of the Near East and Jordan's Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, co-directed by Wael Abu-Azizeh and Mohammad Tarawneh, made a unique discovery that sheds light on daily life and religious belief in the prehistoric Levant. The traps, known as "desert kites," were used extensively throughout prehistoric southwestern Asia. Although most have been dated to the fourth and third millennia B.C.E., the kites from Jibal al-Khashabiyeh date more than three millennia earlier, making them one of the earliest large-scale human constructions. Now, the team has discovered a ritual complex associated with one of the kites.

The unique ritual complex, which dates to around 7000 B.C.E., resembles a miniature desert kite. Inside were found two anthropomorphic stone figures. The taller figure stands 3.5 feet high and bears a depiction of a human face and possibly a drawing of a hunting trap. The smaller figure is a little more than 2 feet tall and features a stylized but finely carved human face. The excavation also uncovered nearly 150 marine fossils, a variety of unusually shaped stones, animal figurines, worked flint objects, and a possible stone altar.

The site's design as a miniature of a desert kite, as well as the depiction of a kite on one of the figures, clearly indicates the importance of hunting to the cultic and ritual activities of these Neolithic people. Prey animals may even have been sacrificed at the site to invoke divine favor for successful hunts at the nearby kites. These findings rewrite our understanding of the Neolithic people who once inhabited the region.

Roman Crucifixion in Britain

A RECENT SURPRISE DISCOVERY has shed light on the gruesome execution practice of Roman crucifixion. A team excavating several graves at a site near Fenstanton in southeastern England came across the remains of a local man, likely in his late 20s, executed by crucifixion during the second century C.E. Despite crucifixion being a relatively common method of Roman execution, this is only the fourth time an archaeological find has provided direct evidence of the practice. This is in part because crucifixion victims—often criminals—rarely received a standard burial.

ADAM WILLIAMS, COURTESY ALBION ARCHAEOLOGY

The Fenstanton victim's pierced heel.

Similar to the previously discovered examples, including the remains of a crucified individual found in a first-century tomb in Jerusalem in 1968, the Fenstanton burial preserves evidence of a nail that pierced one of the individual's heel bones during crucifixion. In contrast to how crucifixion is often depicted in Christian iconography, the feet of the victim would not have been nailed together on the front of the cross—but rather to either side of the cross. This was to prevent victims from being able to lift themselves with their feet. Two more nails would have likely been drilled into the hands of the victim, as indicated in the Gospel of Luke (24:39).

Restoring the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

COURTESY NATHAN STEINMEYER

Dome of the Katholikon, the primary Greek Orthodox chapel of the Holy Sepulchre.

IN THE CHURCH of the Holy Sepulchre, the traditional place of Jesus's crucifixion and burial, restoration means archaeology. Starting in early 2022, the church began a two-year project to restore and repair pavement stones throughout the complex, as well as to install updated plumbing, electrical, and safety systems. During the project, much of the church's floor will be refurbished, allowing a team from the Sapienza University of Rome to study both the floor itself and the archaeological layers beneath. This will be the first time archaeologists have been able to excavate certain sections of the church.

Although the pavement currently found in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre dates to the 19th century, many of the individual paving stones are thought to be much older and could even date back to the fourth century when the church was first constructed by Constantine the Great. The archaeological team intends to study each stone's shape, weight, and markings, as well as the mortar between them. Once the pavement is removed, the team will carry out limited excavations to learn more about the building's history. Most of what is uncovered, however, will be reburied, and the flooring stones will be placed back in their original positions or, if damaged, replaced with new, locally sourced stones.

The repairs and requisite excavations come after nearly 30 years of discussion between the three main Christian denominations—Greek Orthodox, Catholics, and Armenians—that share custodial authority over the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

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Carl & Mary Rasmussen

Greetings! The following is the handcrafted itinerary of the Bible Study trip that Mary and I are leading in response to those who have asked us to put together a "not for credit" study tour. I will be giving mini-lectures along the way both on the bus and on the sites, drawing from my studies. I have spent 16 years of my adult life living in, and guiding, academic groups in Israel, Jordan, Greece, and Turkey *(including living, teaching, and guiding in Jerusalem for 7 years).*

I maintain the web site www.HolylandPhotos.org that features over 6,400 free, high-quality and high-resolution images of Israel, Turkey, Greece, Jordan, and Italy.

I am the author of the *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible*.

Dr. Carl Rasmussen, *Ph.D.*
Emeritus Professor of Old Testament, Bethel University

1 13 DAYS
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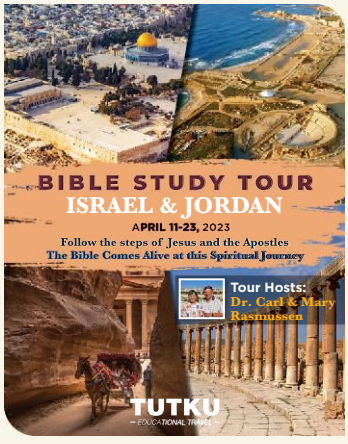

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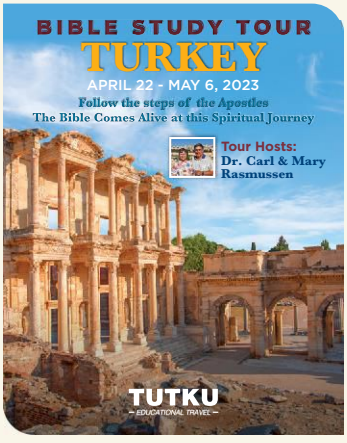
April 22 - May 6, 2023



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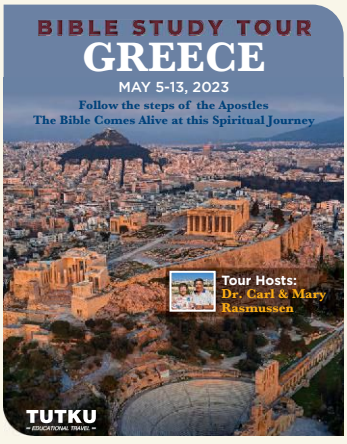

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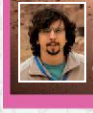

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The Decipherment of Egyptian Hieroglyphs

HIP / ART RESOURCE, NY

Pages from Champollion's notebook (1821–1822).

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, on September 14, 1822, Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) cracked the code of the Egyptian hieroglyphic script and the language behind it. After two years of copying and studying various inscriptions, the French schoolteacher uttered the famous, "*Je tiens l'affaire*" (I've got it!), before fainting from exhaustion and excitement. The first word he could read was the royal name Ramesses. He was then able to make rapid progress, but his *Egyptian Grammar* appeared only posthumously.

The last known hieroglyphic inscription was carved in 394 C.E., and successive generations in Egypt and elsewhere viewed hieroglyphs as purely allegorical signs of unknown mystical meaning. Champollion's discovery proved that, although some hieroglyphic signs stand for entire words and ideas, they mostly represent sounds (syllables or single letters), and the language of hieroglyphic inscriptions is an ancestor to Coptic, which is used to this day by the Coptic Orthodox Church. What gave Champollion the edge over his unsuccessful predecessors was the recent discovery, in 1799, of the Rosetta Stone, which contains the same text in Egyptian and Greek (see p. 66).

Essential to uncovering the ancient Egyptian civilization, the ability to read Egyptian language ushered a new scholarly discipline—Egyptology.

MUJADDARA, CC BY-SA 3.0, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Gezer's high place.

ARCHAEOLOGY ARGOT

Massebah

The practice of erecting stones is very ancient and widespread, documented worldwide with such iconic monuments as Stonehenge in England and the *moai* statues of Rapa Nui (Easter Island).

In Near Eastern archaeology, standing stones are called by the Hebrew word *massebah* (plural: *massebot*) and are attested from many sites throughout the region, including the Bronze Age Canaanite "high places" at Hazor and Gezer and then later in Iron Age shrines and temples associated with the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. They can appear as individual pillars, in pairs, or as several stones arranged in a particular pattern. Although the practice predates the emergence of Israel in Canaan, both archaeology and the Bible offer many examples of *massebot* erected by the ancient Israelites and their ancestors.

Although the precise meaning of these monuments remains elusive, scholars generally ascribe to them either a cultic or commemorative function. Stone pillars set up in temples or near sacred places could have divine associations and may have played a cultic role. Though the Bible explicitly prohibited such use (Leviticus 26:1), the Israelites erected similar monuments as symbols of Yahweh or to commemorate his appearance at a certain place (Genesis 35:14–15; Exodus 24:4). In this commemorative role, *massebot* were typically located at open-air sites and could serve to mark a treaty (Genesis 31:44–48) or victory in battle (1 Samuel 15:12). In this way, some standing stones also functioned like stelae, which themselves are effectively inscribed *massebot*.

Sanitation and Sewers


London's sewer.

SIMON WEBSTER / ALAMY STOCK IMAGES

MORE THAN 25 PERCENT of the world's population—that's more than 2 billion people—do not have access to basic sanitation. That's an astonishing number when you consider that some of the earliest sewage systems were already developed in Mesopotamia by the middle of the third millennium B.C.E.

Although not the oldest sewage system in the world—earlier drainage systems are known from the ancient Near East and across Asia and the Mediterranean—Rome's *Cloaca Maxima* (meaning "greatest sewer" in Latin) is a marvel of engineering. Constructed as early as the sixth century B.C.E., this sewage system was built to drain the marshy lands surrounding the hills of the Eternal City. In later centuries, the system was enclosed, or covered, and by the Imperial period, it also included connections for public baths and lavatories. The *Cloaca Maxima* has remained in continuous use since its original construction. Even today, drainage water flows through the ancient tunnels.

Across time and cultures, the need for safe and effective waste disposal has led to major urban improvement projects. Until the mid-19th century, London had relied on a patchwork of waste disposal methods, including night-soil collectors, who would empty local cesspits. London's growing population pushed this system to the brink, however, and in the summer of 1858, it broke. Known as "The Great Stink," the hot weather caused the polluted Thames River to smell, according to one British minister, like "a Stygian pool reeking with ineffable and unbearable horror." The smell was apparently so bad that, in just 18 days, the Houses of Parliament passed a bill to construct a new sewer system for London. This system is still maintained and used today, although with upgrades to handle London's current size and population.


Remains of the *Cloaca Maxima* in Rome.

VITO ARCOMANO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Tel Dan Nature Reserve
Dan, Israel
en.parks.org.il

DUBY TAL / ALBATROSS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Exploring Beautiful Tel Dan

JONATHAN KLAWANS

THE ARCHAEOLOGY BUG runs unequally in some families. I have no scientific data to back this claim, but anecdotal evidence abounds, starting in my own home. When planning a trip under these circumstances, the best thing may be finding archaeological sites that appeal in other ways.

Tel Dan fits the bill, boasting both biblical archaeology and unrivaled natural beauty.

Tel Dan's archaeological credentials are impeccable. Toward the site's eastern edge, one can see what is said to be the oldest intact archway ever found, part of a Middle Bronze Age (2000–1550 B.C.E.) gate to the Canaanite city—removing yet another architectural achievement for which the Romans are traditionally credited. Just southwest of the Canaanite gate is another gate complex (see above), this one from the Israelite period (1200–721 B.C.E.). It was here that the various fragments of the famous Tel Dan inscription were found, in secondary use. As **BAR** readers will recall, this ninth-century B.C.E. Aramaic inscription may well preserve the earliest written record mentioning King David.

To the north of the two gates, and elevated above them, is the sacred precinct, a temple complex possibly associated with the shrine constructed by Jeroboam I after the breakup of Solomon's United Kingdom (1 Kings 12:26–30). Finds from the Hellenistic and Roman periods attest to centuries of ongoing cultic activity. These finds include a bilingual Greek and Aramaic inscription, speaking of a vow to "the god who is in Dan"—an important confirmation that the site is, indeed, Dan. (The inscriptions and other finds are on display at the Israel Museum and the Nelson Glueck School, both in Jerusalem.)

Tel Dan's long history relates to its spring, which is a principal source of the Jordan River. Visitors to the park will immediately notice the lush greenery and the sounds of rushing water. None of the aforementioned sites can be accessed except by walking 10 or 15 minutes along a network of well-maintained, naturally shaded paths, some of which are even wheelchair accessible.

There is one wading pool where visitors are permitted to cool off (water shoes will help here). But be warned: "Cool off" may be an understatement. It was around 100 degrees Fahrenheit the July day we visited, but our kids could hardly tolerate the frigid spring water on their feet for more than a few minutes. Naturally refreshed, even those who haven't caught the archaeology bug may be convinced to go back and give one of the two nearby gates another look.

Tel Dan is best reached by car. It's just over an hour due north of Tiberias and 15 minutes northeast of Kiryat Shmona.

Missing: Have You Seen These Scrolls?

ÅRSTEIN JUSTNES AND **SIGNE M. HÆGELAND**

IT MAY SEEM SUPRISING, but 75 years after the discovery of the first Dead Sea Scrolls, we still don't know how many scroll fragments there are in total. Published references to the number of recovered fragments vary considerably—from 25,000 to more than 200,000. Even more worrisome, not an insignificant number of those fragments seem to have been lost.

Writing for *Jerusalem Report* in December 1991, journalist Felice Maranz listed ten large fragments as missing, among them portions of the books of Daniel and Samuel.[1] When she questioned John Strugnell and Emanuel Tov—the former and current editors-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls publication project, respectively—neither was keen on discussing the issue.

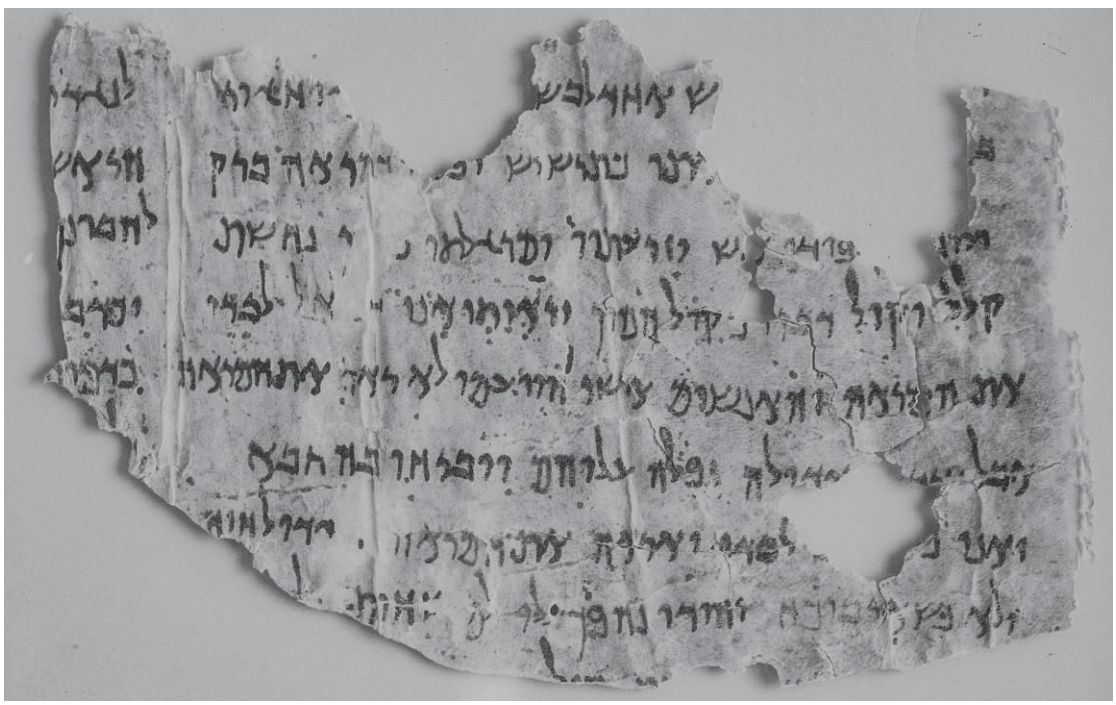
So what portion of the total number of fragments is now gone? In other words: How considerable a loss is this?

Some 30 years after the alarm was first sounded, our team (the authors and Martin S. Stomnås) set out to look for missing Dead Sea Scroll fragments.[2] We use the term "lost" to refer to scroll fragments that are thought to be either destroyed, stolen, misplaced, or simply missing.

Already in 1960, five fragments were reported stolen from the Palestine Archaeological Museum (known as the Rockefeller Museum since 1967). They included a large fragment from a Samuel scroll, three fragments from a Daniel scroll, and a fragment from a non-biblical scroll named *Beatitudes*. Reflecting on the loss of the Samuel fragment many years later, Strugnell seemed surprisingly relaxed: "It didn't matter. I mean, it would be nice for a museum to have the Samuel [fragment], but we've got the pictures. ... That's better than the original."[3] Despite the evident loss, the problem with stolen fragments, at least to Strugnell, seemed marginal. To this day, there are rumors about other thefts.

When scroll scholar Stephen A. Reed conducted his massive cataloging project at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem and the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, California, he noted that several fragments were missing from the plates (manuscripts grouped and mounted in between plates of glass) at the Rockefeller Museum, including several with Cave 5 material.[4]

In his brief annotations, Reed sometimes pondered the whereabouts of the missing pieces: "Missing at



Two joined fragments of 4Q114 (Book of Daniel) stolen in 1960.

Rockefeller, possibly at Shrine of Book," or, more often, just "Shrine?" Building on his work, our preliminary investigation indicates that the Cave 5 manuscripts are neither at the Rockefeller nor at the Shrine of the Book. No one seems to know where they are.

Throughout *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, the official publication series for the Dead Sea Scrolls, there are hundreds of brief notes about lost fragments. Phrases like "cannot be found in the Rockefeller Museum" or simply "missing" or "lost" abound. Most of these pieces are indeed very small, but they add up to quite a substantial lot.

Volume 33 of the series is a special case. It consists mostly of small, unidentified fragments. Notably, almost every single one of the 41 entries includes a disclaimer about fragments that could not be located. In total, this adds up to about 450 missing fragments. Such disclaimers are consistently followed by a comforting sentence stating that in most cases the missing pieces have been identified, but their present location is not known. We suspect that most of these fragments have been moved to other plates, but there doesn't seem to be any record of such interventions.

Our database currently lists more than 1,000 Dead Sea Scroll fragments that are missing. We do not believe that all of these pieces are actually lost, but there seems to be no easy way to find out. Thankfully, other scholars helped us locate a handful of fragments after we posted them on Twitter. And notably, some of the manuscripts that Reed couldn't find in the early 1990s have since turned up—for instance 2QRuth[a], a Ruth manuscript from Cave 2.

Dead Sea Scroll scholars face a paradox: Even today, 30 years after the controversial crusade by Hershel Shanks to "free the Dead Sea Scrolls,"* most scholars still do not have full access to the tens of thousands of scroll fragments that have been discovered. The leading online respository for the scrolls, the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, is incomplete, and its long-anticipated replacement, the Scripta Qumranica Electronica platform, is still in an intermediate stage of development.[5] As scholars gain full access to these online collections, perhaps more "missing" scroll fragments will resurface.

[1] "The Case of the Missing Scrolls," *Jerusalem Report* (December 26, 1991).

[2] Visit our project at lyingpen.uia.no.

[3] Weston W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 239.

[4] Stephen A. Reed, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Catalogue: Documents, Photographs and Museum Inventory Numbers*, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 32 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994).

[5] See deadseascrolls.org.il for the Digital Library and sqe.deadseascrolls.org.il for the new platform.

* Martin Abegg, "Hershel's Crusade, No. 1: He Who Freed the Dead Sea Scrolls," **BAR**, March/April/May/June 2018.

Using AI to Identify Scroll Scribes

MLADEN POPOVIĆ

AFTER THE BIBLE, the Dead Sea Scrolls are the most famous collection of writings from ancient Israel. However, the individuals who penned the scrolls remain anonymous. To identify individual scribes in the Dead Sea Scrolls, my team of scroll scholars and artificial intelligence (AI) experts has developed a tool that analyzes the scrolls on the level of individual scribal strokes.

Scholars have previously suggested that single scribes wrote some manuscripts.* They based their claims on the detailed examination of handwriting. But traditional paleography (the study of ancient writing) is always subjective. Paleographers typically try to find a "smoking gun" in the form of a very specific trait in a letter that would identify a scribe. However, scribes may show a range in a variety of forms of individual letters within one or across more manuscripts. At the same time, different scribes may have almost the same handwriting. So the challenge for paleographers is to determine which differences in handwriting are likely to be idiographic (unique to an individual writer) and thus significant, which requires lots of experience.

To tackle this problem, our team used digital images of the scrolls and applied pattern recognition and artificial intelligence techniques. We performed a case study on the Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran Cave 1 that offers a good example of the lack of a robust method in Dead Sea Scrolls paleography for determining and verifying writer identity. Because its handwriting is nearly uniform, some scholars say one scribe wrote this

* See Sidnie White Crawford, "Scribe Links Qumran and Masada," **BAR**, November/December 2012.

SHRINE OF THE BOOK / THE ISRAEL MUSEUM, JERUSALEM

Artificial Intelligence (AI) confirms that the Great Isaiah Scroll was penned by two scribes, who switched at the halfway mark (between columns 27 and 28, pictured here).

scroll. Others, however, suggest there were two scribes. Our team was able to present new evidence for two scribes.[1] Here's how we did it.

The Great Isaiah Scroll, which is about 23 feet long with 54 columns of text, contains the letter *aleph* at least 5,000 times. It is humanly impossible to compare all these occurrences by eye. Computers, on the other hand, are well suited to analyze large datasets and can make all sorts of calculations at the level of letters and even individual strokes and curvatures. Although the human eye is amazing and presumably considers these levels, too, the process is often not transparent or quantifiable, especially when there is much data to consider.

The first hurdle was to train an algorithm to separate the inscribed text (ink) from its background (leather or papyrus). For this separation, or binarization, Maruf Dhali, a member of our research team, developed a state-of-the-art artificial neural network that can be trained using deep learning (machine learning method that imitates the way humans learn). The neural network keeps the original ink traces intact as they appear on the digital images. This is important because the ancient ink traces relate directly to a person's muscle movement and are person-specific.

Our first analysis showed that the columns of text in the Great Isaiah Scroll fell into two distinct groups and that these were not distributed randomly through the scroll, but rather were clustered, with a transition around the halfway mark (between columns 27 and 28).

Expecting more than one writer, we then recomputed the similarities between the columns, this time using the patterns of letter fragments. This second analysis confirmed the presence of two different scribes. When we added "noise" (spurious letter forms) to the data, the results did not change. We also succeeded in demonstrating that the second scribe shows more variation within his writing than the first, although their writing is very similar.

Finally, we visualized the collected data in heatmaps for individual letters that show all attested letter shapes morphed into one character and coded in color from cold to hot, depending on the statistical frequency of individual shapes. These heatmaps show minute but significant differences between characters from the two halves of the scroll.

Certain aspects of the Great Isaiah Scroll and the positioning of the text had led some scholars to suggest that a new scribe had begun writing after column 27, but this suggestion was not generally accepted. Now, we can confirm this with a quantitative analysis of the handwriting as well as with robust statistical analyses. Instead of basing judgment on more-or-less impressionistic evidence, we can now demonstrate that the separation is statistically significant using computer-based artificial intelligence.

Our breakthrough in scroll paleography is that we can now access the level of individual scribes and carefully observe how they worked on these manuscripts. Applying our digital tool to other scrolls may reveal relations between manuscripts and texts that have previously gone unnoticed. The ability to identify scribes can contribute to a finer understanding of the different groupings and collections of manuscripts within the Dead Sea Scrolls, contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics of manuscript production and collection in biblical times.

We are now able to distinguish between individual scribes. Although we will never know their names, with artificial intelligence, it at least feels as if we can finally shake hands with them through their handwriting. ◙

[1] See Mladen Popović, Maruf A. Dhali, and Lambert Schomaker, "Artificial Intelligence Based Writer Identification Generates New Evidence for the Unknown Scribes of the Dead Sea Scrolls Exemplified by the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa)," *PLoS ONE* 16.4 (2021): e0249769.

Emanuel Hausman (1923–2022)

COURTESY SHAY HAUSMAN

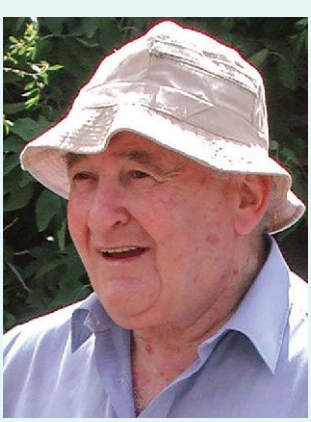
EMANUEL HAUSMAN passed away in Jerusalem on January 18, 2022, two weeks before his 99th birthday. Although many **BAR** readers may not be familiar with his name, they doubtless are the beneficiaries of his life's work through the publishing house Carta Jerusalem. Hausman was a pioneer in the historical cartography of the land of Israel.

In 1958, Hausman and his late partner Amnon Superman founded the Carta Company, which provided mapping services to various institutions. In 1960, an innovative idea matured in the mind of Hausman: to map the land of Israel, its sites, settlements, and roads, and to gather all the information into one guide. The result was the *Carta Guide to the Roads of Israel*, first published in 1962. *The Carta Atlas of the Biblical Period* (1964), edited by Yohanan Aharoni, one of the most prominent archaeologists in Israel at the time, followed. It would become the most widely published biblical atlas ever sold.

Hausman was a visionary figure who continued his daily work well after the age of 90. May his memory continue to be a blessing for all those who have been touched by his work and life.—**R. STEVEN NOTLEY**

Emanuel Marx (1927–2022)

EMANUEL MARX, Israeli anthropologist and expert on Bedouin societies, passed away on February 13, 2022; he was 94. Marx earned his master's degree in Middle East history at the Hebrew University. In 1959, a scholarship enabled Marx to study for a Ph.D. at the University of Manchester in England. His dissertation, which focused on the Negev's Abu Gweid tribe, was published as *Bedouin of the Negev* (1967) and includes ethnographic, geographic, and historical data that are invaluable for archaeologists.



COURTESY OF NAAMA GOREN-INBAR, HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

In 1964, Marx established Tel Aviv University's Department of Anthropology and Sociology, where he taught until his retirement in 1995. In 1976, Marx also founded an anthropological research unit at Ben-Gurion University's Desert Research Institute in Sde Boker. In the early 1980s, I had a postdoctoral fellowship with Emanuel at Sde Boker, with a particular interest in his research on the Sinai Bedouin. Later, when writing up the excavations of the Chalcolithic temple at Gilat, I reached out to Emanuel for his insights on Bedouin pilgrimage—and how his findings might inform the emergence of early ritual centers. For archaeologists like myself, Marx's research on contemporary Bedouin provided important insights into ancient nomads, their customs, and their relationships with surrounding states.—**THOMAS E. LEVY**

For extended tributes, please visit **biblicalarchaeology.org/milestones**

WHERE IS IT?

(SEE QUIZ ON P. 13)

Answer: 1 Venice, Italy

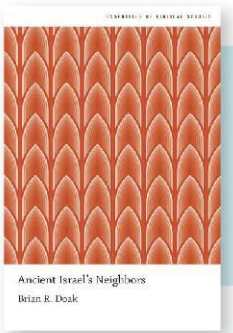
These four horses, sculpted from almost pure copper, are on display inside St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, Italy. The horses previously adorned the basilica's façade, where they were replaced by replicas in the 1980s.

The horses did not originate in Venice. Before coming to the "Floating City," they decorated the hippodrome in Constantinople (modern Istanbul). The 12th- and 13th-century historian Nicetas Choniates recalls "four gilt-bronze horses" above the hippodrome's starting posts (*Annals* 119–120). An earlier, eighth-century text says the hippodrome's horses came from the island of Chios, Greece, during the reign of Theodosius II (r. 408–450 C.E.). Yet some scholars think the horses might have an even older origin. They date them to the second or third century, possibly having been commissioned by Septimius Severus (r. 193–211 C.E.) for the hippodrome of the city on the Bosporus that was then known as Byzantium.

The horses stayed in Constantinople until 1204, when they were captured during the Fourth Crusade and taken to Venice. They had another international voyage in 1797, when Napoleon took the horses to Paris and set them up on the Arc of Triumph of Carrousel. Their Parisian stay was short-lived, though, and the horses returned to Venice in 1815.

Ancient Israel's Neighbors

ANN E. KILLEBREW



Ancient Israel's Neighbors

By Brian R. Doak

(Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2020), x + 212 pp., 24 figures (maps and drawings), $99.00 (hardcover); $24.95 (paperback); $17.99 (ebook).

DURING THE PAST 30 YEARS, several multi-author volumes have addressed peoples of the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament) from the broader ancient Near East.[1] Brian Doak's book is different in that it is authored by a single scholar (hence more cohesive) and focuses on Israel's immediate neighbors. These include the Canaanites, Arameans, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines, and Phoenicians, presented in separate chapters according to the chronological order in which they appear in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapters begin with an overview of the archaeological and extrabiblical textual evidence. Then follows a discussion of how the group is presented in the Bible, which is compared and contrasted with information from other primary sources. Lastly, the author considers the "fate" of each neighbor and its representation in later New Testament, Christian, and Jewish sources.

Doak considers the Canaanites, who inhabited Canaan before the emergence of the Israelites, to be Israel's first and most intriguing neighbor, with implications for Israel's identity and thinking about other neighboring groups. He concludes by addressing the question, "What happened to the Canaanites?" as understood by the New Testament writers and later sources.

The Arameans, who bordered Israel to the north, are mentioned 135 times in the Bible. Israel's relationship to the Arameans is complex: They share both a genealogical and adversarial connection. As summarized by Doak, Aram, with its localized power centers and shifting boundaries on the margins of Mesopotamia, appears regularly in first-millennium Assyrian texts. The Tel Dan ("House of David") inscription, written in Aramaic, is well known to readers of **BAR** and is a key archaeological discovery for Aram's relationship with Israel. Doak then discusses how historical circumstances led to the spread of Aramaic, which became the international language of trade and commerce of the Babylonian and Persian empires. Its use and impact continued well into the Common Era.

Israel's neighbors to the east (beyond the Jordan River)—the

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Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites—make their biblical debut in the Book of Genesis. Their geographical core lies within the boundaries of modern-day Jordan, with Edom's territory extending into the Negev. The Ammonites continued to flourish into the Hellenistic period, and the modern capital of Jordan, Amman, reflects their strong historical legacy. The Moabites, on the other hand, seem to have disappeared as an entity during the Babylonian conquests of the region. Nonetheless, they continued to serve as a symbol of one of Israel's enemies in later literature, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Edomites survived into the Roman period, during which time this region was occupied by the Nabateans, a nomadic desert people who created the famous rock city of Petra.

The Philistines and Phoenicians were Israel's coastal neighbors to the west, with the Philistines in the southern coastal plain and the Phoenicians to the north, in modern-day Lebanon. The Philistine origins are outside the Levant. Thus, their material culture and traditions, especially during the earlier Iron Age (12th–11th centuries B.C.E.), are distinctive from the Levantine cultures and reflect Aegean influences. Contrary to archaeological evidence, they are portrayed in the Bible as an uncultured people. The biblical Phoenicians, on the other hand, receive a more accurate description as wealthy traders, though they are reviled as idol worshipers. As Doak explains, the Phoenicians are the first-millennium B.C.E. coastal descendants of the Canaanites and, like the Canaanites, cannot be considered an "ethnic" group per se. Rather, they were a collection of peoples who lived in city-states and shared a language and material culture. During the Babylonian conquests, major Philistine cities were destroyed, though Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod continued to be inhabited. In contrast, Phoenician influence spread throughout the Mediterranean region well into the first centuries of the Common Era.

Doak concludes his overview by assessing his original goal of presenting each neighbor through integration of the available historical data with the views of the biblical authors, and he determines that this is an impossible task, as the biblical representations depict any neighbor as an idolatrous enemy of Israel. Uniformly, Israel's neighbors have shameful origins and are the target of prophetic condemnation. Doak's solution is to present each neighbor on its own terms based on the archaeological and extrabiblical evidence, followed by the viewpoint given by the biblical authors. Readers of **BAR** will doubtlessly enjoy this engaging, accessible, and affordable introduction to ancient Israel's closest neighbors.

[1] See, e.g., Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, eds., *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994); Bill. T. Arnold and Brent A. Strawn, eds., *The World Around the Old Testament: People and Places of the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016); and Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilder, and John H. Walton, eds., *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

GIFT OF J. PIERPONT MORGAN, 1917/METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

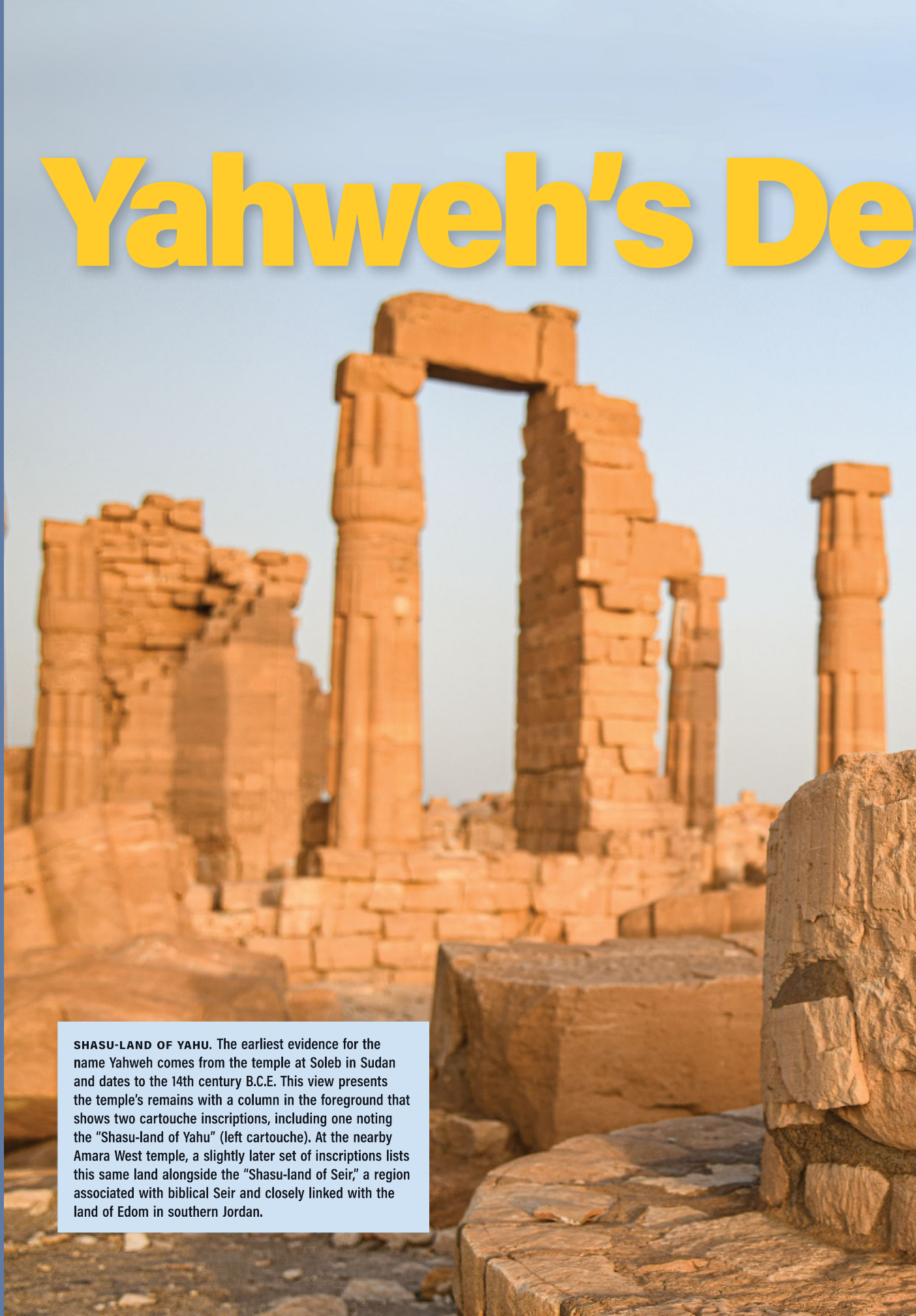
Kyiv, Ukraine

This circular pendant, crafted from silver and niello (a black alloy of sulfur mixed with copper, silver, or lead), depicts a mythical griffin outlined in black and surrounded by a series of braided arches within a filigree border. The pendant's opposite side (not shown) features an intricate pattern of interlaced linear etchings. It was crafted in Kyiv sometime in the 11th–12th centuries C.E. and measures about 2.5 inches in diameter.

Known as temple pendants, such pieces were commonly connected by a short chain to a diadem-like headdress—a practice well attested from the Byzantine Empire. Although formally beyond Byzantine rule, Kyiv was one of Constantinople's major trading partners and capital of the Kievan Rus Empire, which extended from the White Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. Some scholars believe this vast territory was first united by invading Vikings who founded the Kievan Rus state in the ninth century before quickly assimilating into the region's eastern Slavic population. Indeed, Scandinavian influence may be seen in the interlacing patterns often found on the back side of temple pendants.

This pendant is now on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Yahweh's De



SHASU-LAND OF YAHU. The earliest evidence for the name Yahweh comes from the temple at Soleb in Sudan and dates to the 14th century B.C.E. This view presents the temple's remains with a column in the foreground that shows two cartouche inscriptions, including one noting the "Shasu-land of Yahu" (left cartouche). At the nearby Amara West temple, a slightly later set of inscriptions lists this same land alongside the "Shasu-land of Seir," a region associated with biblical Seir and closely linked with the land of Edom in southern Jordan.

sert Origins

JUAN MANUEL TEBES

WE ALL KNOW THAT YAHWEH WAS, first and foremost, ancient Israel's God. Yet, even after hundreds of years of archaeology and biblical scholarship, we know very little about his origins—and how he came to be worshiped by the peoples of Israel and Judah. Scholars have searched for the name Yahweh in ancient West Semitic texts, especially those found at Ebla, Mari, and Ugarit, but no evidence of pre-Israelite Yahweh worship among the peoples of the ancient Levant has surfaced.

If Yahweh wasn't originally a Levantine deity, where did he come from, and when exactly did he become the national God of Israel?

Many scholars, including myself, have used the available biblical and archaeological evidence to argue that Yahweh originated in the desert lands south of ancient Judah. Although most look to details from the story of Moses in Midian (Exodus 2–4) to argue that Yahweh became Israel's God during the time of the Exodus (the so-called Midianite Hypothesis), I believe that the Israelites only encountered this desert deity centuries later, during the tenth century B.C.E., when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were in frequent contact with the pastoral-nomadic peoples of the southern deserts.

Before discussing the archaeological evidence for Yahweh's emergence, let us first review the Midianite Hypothesis and biblical texts related to Yahweh's southern origins.

PHOTO BY TITUS KENNEDY

The Midianite Hypothesis (also sometimes called the Kenite Hypothesis) argues that Yahweh came originally from the arid lands located to the south and southeast of Canaan and in northwestern Arabia. The hypothesis was first proposed by 19th-century European scholars perplexed by the connection that some biblical texts establish between Moses and the Midianites.[1] It was to the land of Midian, in northwestern Arabia, where Moses fled from Egypt and where he stayed and married a daughter of Jethro, "the priest of Midian." There, he also met for the first time Yahweh at Mt. Horeb, the "mountain of God" (Exodus 3), while Jethro later recognized that Yahweh "is greater than all the gods" and offered sacrifices in his honor (Exodus 18:1–12). Other biblical texts identify Moses's father-in-law as Reuel (Exodus 2:18; Numbers 10:29) or Hobab (Judges 1:16; 4:11, 17). The latter is associated with the Kenites, a clan of nomadic blacksmiths who also come from the southern desert regions. Some scholars have therefore attributed a significant role to the Kenites (and metallurgy) in carrying the worship of Yahweh to Canaan and early Israel.

More recent biblical scholarship, however, tends to distrust the biblical traditions that connect Moses to Midian or the Kenites. For one, none of these texts explicitly state that the Midianites worshiped Yahweh before the Israelites. These stories, as many now argue, were likely redacted in exilic or post-exilic times

DESERT LANDSCAPE. The Timna Valley, located in the Wadi Arava, was a major source of copper throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages. The pharaohs of New Kingdom Egypt launched extensive mining and smelting operations at Timna (13th–12th centuries B.C.E.) that engaged members of the local nomadic tribes as miners, smiths, and laborers. Since the 1960s, archaeologists have unearthed evidence of Timna's smelting camps and metallurgical workshops (one shown below, the fenced area to the left), as well as several open-air shrines (fenced area to the right) used by the mine's itinerant workers.

ZEV RADOVAN / BIBLELANDPICTURES.COM

PHOTO BY JUAN MANUEL TEBES

DESERT SHRINE. The most important of Timna's desert shrines was built in the early 13th century B.C.E. and dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Hathor. Despite its formal associations with the foreign goddess, the shrine was built open to the air and against a cliff face, in the tradition of religious architecture common to the desert peoples of the south. Worshipers left votive gifts within the sanctuary, where fire and metallurgical rituals were carried out. When Egypt abandoned Timna in the mid-12th century B.C.E., local desert peoples continued to use the shrine and recycled older cultic elements, such as the standing stones.

(i.e., after the sixth century B.C.E.), and although it is undeniable that they are rooted in ancient traditions, their historicity is open to debate. In addition, there is little archaeological evidence that can connect the early Israelites to the land of Midian.

Still, even outside the story of Moses and Midian, there are a number of biblical texts that solidly point to the south as Yahweh's homeland. The key text is the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), a victory hymn widely considered to be one of the earliest pieces of Hebrew literature.* Yahweh is depicted as a warrior deity who approaches from the south amid earthquakes and storms: "Yahweh, when you set out from Seir, as you trod the land of Edom." Later, in verse 5, Yahweh is also called "the one of Sinai." The biblical writers locate Edom in what is today southern Jordan, while Seir was also a southern region, probably situated in the Negev.

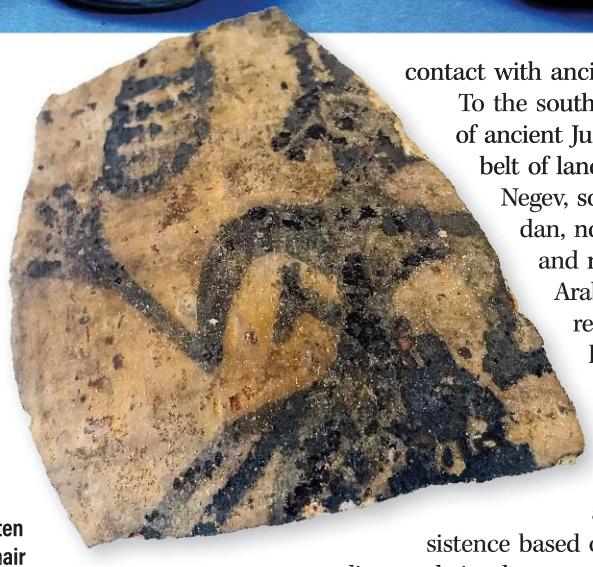
Another early poetic text, the Blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33:2), uses similar imagery to connect Israel's God to the south: "Yahweh came from Sinai, for them, after Seir, he rose on the horizon, after Mt. Paran he shone forth." Even though scholars disagree on the exact location of both Mt. Sinai and Mt. Paran, it is clear that both were in the south (see "Mt. Sinai: The Mountain of Yahweh," p. 37).

Later biblical texts, such as Habakkuk 3 and Psalm 68, both likely written during the seventh–sixth centuries B.C.E. or later, continue to view the south as Yahweh's homeland. These texts reference many of the same southern locales mentioned in the earlier poetry, such as Sinai and Mt. Paran, but also include Teman, probably

* Lawrence E. Stager, "The Song of Deborah—Why Some Tribes Answered the Call and Others Did Not," **BAR**, January/February 1989.

INSET: PHOTO BY JUAN MANUEL TEBES. WITH PERMISSION FROM THE DEUTSCHES BERGBAU-MUSEUM

TOP: ZEV RADOVAN / BIBLELANDPICTURES.COM



QURAYYAH POTTERY. Distinctive painted pottery, likely coming from the site of Qurayyah in northwest Arabia, is often found in Late Bronze and early Iron Age sites in the desert regions south of Judah. As evidenced by vessels found at Timna (above), the pottery features colorful figural and geometric designs, including ostriches (front center vessel) that would have been hunted by local tribes. Some pieces, like the sherd at right from the site of Barqa el-Hetiye near the ancient copper mines of Faynan in southern Jordan, also show human figures, often depicted with arms extended, long hair or a headdress, skirts, and armed with a dagger or sword.

a general designation for "the south."

So is there any historical reality behind the tradition of Yahweh's southern homeland? Do we have any evidence beyond the Bible? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. A trove of archaeological and epigraphic evidence tells us a lot about the social setting where Yahweh emerged and how this deity came to be adopted by the ancient Israelites.

Rather than looking for evidence of a specific biblical episode, such as Moses's connection to Midian, we will center our attention on the history and archaeology of the southern desert regions. What does this evidence reveal about the cultic practices and religious beliefs of the people who lived in the southern deserts, and when might these people have been in direct contact with ancient Israel?

To the south and southeast of ancient Judah lies an arid belt of land comprising the Negev, southern Transjordan, northeastern Sinai, and northwestern Arabia. Most of these regions receive little precipitation. Since prehistoric times, the local populations have developed a mode of subsistence based on nomadic pastoralism and simple, opportunistic farming. This way of life had, of course, a huge influence on their religious practices, as evident by the distinct types of cultic architecture and features that archaeologists find across these desert regions.

Open-air courtyard shrines were the most common type of religious architecture, consisting of sacred spaces of varied shape and dimension. These shrines had few, if any, roofed spaces and presented a limited repertoire of cultic furniture. Where the landscape allowed, the shrines were often cut into cliff faces, making use of natural cavities in the rock or enclosing rocky overhangs with stone architecture.

Rock art, too, often provides a glimpse into their cultic beliefs. The southern deserts are dotted with a wide array of rock carvings from different periods, and many of these drawings reflect cultic imagery, including worshipers, rituals, and ritually symbolic animals.

Ancient desert peoples also spent considerable time and resources building large funerary structures, typically mounded piles of stone that archaeologists call cairns or tumuli. The sites, often located at prominent locations in the landscape, were frequently visited, rebuilt, and reused over the millennia, suggesting that death and the afterlife were important elements of the desert belief system.

Unworked standing stones were, by far, the most important component of the desert cultic sites.* They are normally found within open-air shrines or arranged in rows at small cultic sites.

* Uzi Avner, "Sacred Stones in the Desert," **BAR**, May/June 2001.

Mt. Sinai: The Mountain of Yahweh

JUAN MANUEL TEBES

The exact location of Mt. Sinai—also called Mt. Horeb in the biblical text—has eluded scholars for centuries. Following Christian traditions dating as early as the fourth century C.E., most consider the mountainous region of southern Sinai as the most likely setting of Yahweh's theophany (visible manifestation of a deity), with two neighboring mountains attracting most of the attention: Jebel Serbal and Jebel Musa. St. Catherine's Monastery rests at the foot of the latter.

Other, more easterly locations have also been proposed, including the Kadesh Barnea area in northeastern Sinai, Har Karkom in the southwestern Negev, and the Petra region in southern Jordan. In addition, a long tradition in scholarship, originating with Jewish-Hellenistic and early Christian authors but popularized by modern Western scholars traveling to northwestern Arabia, has suggested that Mt. Sinai was located in Midian. According to these claims, Mt. Sinai should be located in the Jebel al-Lawz mountain range east of the Gulf of Aqaba or the Hallat al-Badr, west of Tayma, both in northwest Saudi Arabia.

Wherever one locates Mt. Sinai, however, it is clear that the biblical writers understood Yahweh to be a "mountain god," similar to the Canaanite gods known from the Ugaritic texts. At Ugarit, along Syria's northern coast, the gods are depicted as having their own residences, often atop mountain peaks, from where they moved freely to do their businesses. Most famous was Baal, who built his palace at Sapan, biblical Mt. Zaphon. It is likely that the biblical authors adapted the Canaanite tradition of the march of the divine warrior Baal, in the midst of storms from his palace, to depict Yahweh's march from his southern sanctuary (Judges 5).

MOUNTAIN ABODE. St. Catherine's Monastery rests at the base of the traditional Mt. Sinai (Jebel Musa) in Egypt.

EFESENKO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

TIMNA ROCK ART. This engraving from a large rock panel close to the Timna Hathor shrine depicts scenes of ritual hunting. The entire panel shows armed men, some standing and others being pulled in chariots, chasing desert animals such as ibexes, ostriches, and oryx antelopes. The scenes indicate the important role played by tribal leaders—either warrior chiefs or shaman-like priests—in mediating human relationships with local deities, including possibly the desert God Yahweh.

Such stones may have served as aniconic representations of deities, but they may also have been set up to remember a special individual or event or to mark boundaries and tombs.

Archaeological and historical evidence indicates that the early worship of Yahweh included many of these same features. This leads us to the rather remarkable conclusion that Yahweh was, indeed, a desert deity who originated in the desert lands south of Israel. But when and how did this happen?

The earliest epigraphic evidence of the name Yahweh appears in two inscriptions from a pair of New Kingdom Egyptian temples in Nubia, present-day Sudan. The first one is inscribed on a column from the Temple of Soleb (see pp. 32–33), dating to the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep III (c. 1390–1353 B.C.E.), while the second appears on a wall in the Amara West temple and dates to the time of Ramesses II (c. 1279–1213 B.C.E.). These inscriptions present topographical lists depicting several lands of the "Shasu," the Egyptian name for the pastoral-nomadic populations that lived east of the Sinai. Among these is listed the "Shasu-land of Yahu (*yhw*)," which most scholars believe to be the earliest attestation of the name Yahweh.

These inscriptions indicate that, by the 14th century, the name Yahu was associated with regions south of Canaan. A southern locale for Yahu is clearly suggested by a reference in the same list to the "Shasu-land of Seir." As we have seen, Seir is a name known in the Bible as a southern region close to Edom. Other New Kingdom Egyptian inscriptions point in the same direction, as they refer to Shasu tribes from Edom and Seir. Yet we cannot be sure exactly how this Yahu was understood. Was it the name of a place, tribe, or god? Did the name perhaps have multiple, overlapping associations? The texts do not tell us.

Fortunately, archaeology provides some additional information about where (and when) Yahweh may have emerged. During the New Kingdom, the Negev was part of the southern periphery of Egypt's empire in Canaan. The Egyptian pharaohs routinely exploited the

copper mines at Timna in the southern Arava, work that was carried out with the help of miners and smiths from the surrounding desert regions, including Edom and northwest Arabia.

Archaeologists have excavated several cultic places in and around Timna, including courtyard and rock-cut shrines. The most important was a small sanctuary, ostensibly dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Hathor and built in the 13th–12th centuries B.C.E. in the location of an earlier local shrine. The Timna shrine consisted of a shallow niche cut into the face of the cliff; in front stood an open-air portico and an outer court with standing stones. Here, rituals were carried out, some of them involving the use of metallurgy and fire.

While the local miners who used the shrine did not leave any inscriptions, something of their thoughts and beliefs can be glimpsed from the iconography found on their pottery and drawings carved near the shrine. The most impressive imagery appears on painted vessels, thought to originate from the site of Qurayyah, which is located about 90 miles south of Timna in northwest Saudi Arabia, the heartland of ancient Midian. This distinctive pottery often features human figures with long hair or special headgear and arms extended in gestures of "adoration" (perhaps worshipers or priests), as well as depictions of men armed with swords or daggers, possibly hunters or tribal chiefs. The pottery also includes depictions of ostriches, desert birds that were frequently hunted in antiquity and thus may have symbolized man's power over animals and nature. Similar figures and scenes are found in nearby rock art, which shows armed men participating in sacred hunts, a ritual known mostly from pre-Islamic South Arabia.

Taken together, this iconographic evidence expresses the importance that local desert peoples attached to hunting, war, and tribal leadership. These images give us an idea of the tribal world in which Yahweh emerged, where worshipers encountered the divine through intricate rituals mediated by tribal warriors or priests who were attached to desert deities.

Although more recent proponents of the Midianite Hypothesis have used such archaeological evidence—especially the appearance and distribution of the Qurayyah painted pottery—to argue that Yahweh emerged as Israel's God during or shortly after the presumed time of Moses and the Exodus (i.e., 13th and 12th centuries B.C.E.), there is, in fact, nothing to indicate such a scenario. During the early Iron Age, when the tribes of Israel supposedly first adopted Yahweh as their God from the southern desert peoples, there is little evidence of contact between the central hill country, where most scholars agree ancient Israel first appeared, and the arid regions to the south. Qurayyah painted pottery is found almost exclusively at sites in the Negev and southern Transjordan, while virtually none has been found in the central hill country. Similarly, while copper and bronze artifacts from the Arava mines are found at northern sites, the finds are concentrated in the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys, not in the rural hill country settlements. This suggests that during the Iron

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YEVGENI KACNELSON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

DESERT DWELLER. This 12th-century B.C.E. depiction of a Shasu prisoner on a floor tile comes from the palace of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu in Egypt. "Shasu" was the Egyptian name for the nomadic pastoralists who lived east of the Sinai. Here, the prisoner is bearded and wearing a distinctive headdress and colorful robe and tunic.

Age I (c. 1200–1000 B.C.E.), it was the remnants of the urban Canaanites who had contacts with the southern miners and smiths, not the early Israelites.

I argue that it was only centuries later, during the tenth century B.C.E., that we have the first evidence for sustained contact between the peoples of the desert in the south and the Israelites of the north. During the tenth century, long after the collapse of the Egyptian empire, the new royal houses of Israel and Judah established towns and settlements along their southern frontier, especially in the Beersheba Valley of the northern Negev. These settlements encouraged the two-way flow of religious ideas and practices between the northern newcomers and the pastoral-nomadic peoples of the south. It was at this moment, not before, that ancient Israel began to worship its new national God, Yahweh.

The Israelites' rapid adoption of this southern desert deity may seem surprising, but it should be remembered that Yahweh was, first and foremost, the patron deity of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The Hebrew Bible preserves evidence of ancient Israel's early worship of Canaanite deities such as El, Baal, and Asherah, and of Yahweh's competition with these gods and his rise to prominence (Deuteronomy 33:26–27; Psalm 18:7–19). During the tenth century, Yahweh was rapidly assimilated into the Israelite pantheon, with the kings of Israel and Judah eager to rally support behind the banner of this new southern God who, with time, took over many of the qualities of and even surpassed his rival Canaanite deities, particularly the aged patriarchal god El and the storm god Baal.[2]

Royal sponsorship was essential to Yahweh's rapid ascension, and he was gradually adopted by the rest of the population in a process that took centuries—as attested by the familiar rants of biblical prophets against foreign gods. By the ninth century, confirmation of Yahweh's role as Israel's national God comes from the Mesha Stele, in which Mesha, king of Moab, guided by his god Chemosh, claims to have defeated Israel and pillaged the ritual vessels of the Israelite God Yahweh.

Additional evidence for the worship of Yahweh among the Israelites comes from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, a lonely hilltop site in northeastern Sinai that is dated to the late ninth and early eighth centuries and variously interpreted as an Israelite fort, a caravanserai, or a cultic center. Whatever its purpose, Kuntillet 'Ajrud was visited by passing travelers who left votive offerings, often inscribed with names and blessings. Several of the site's now famous inscriptions mention

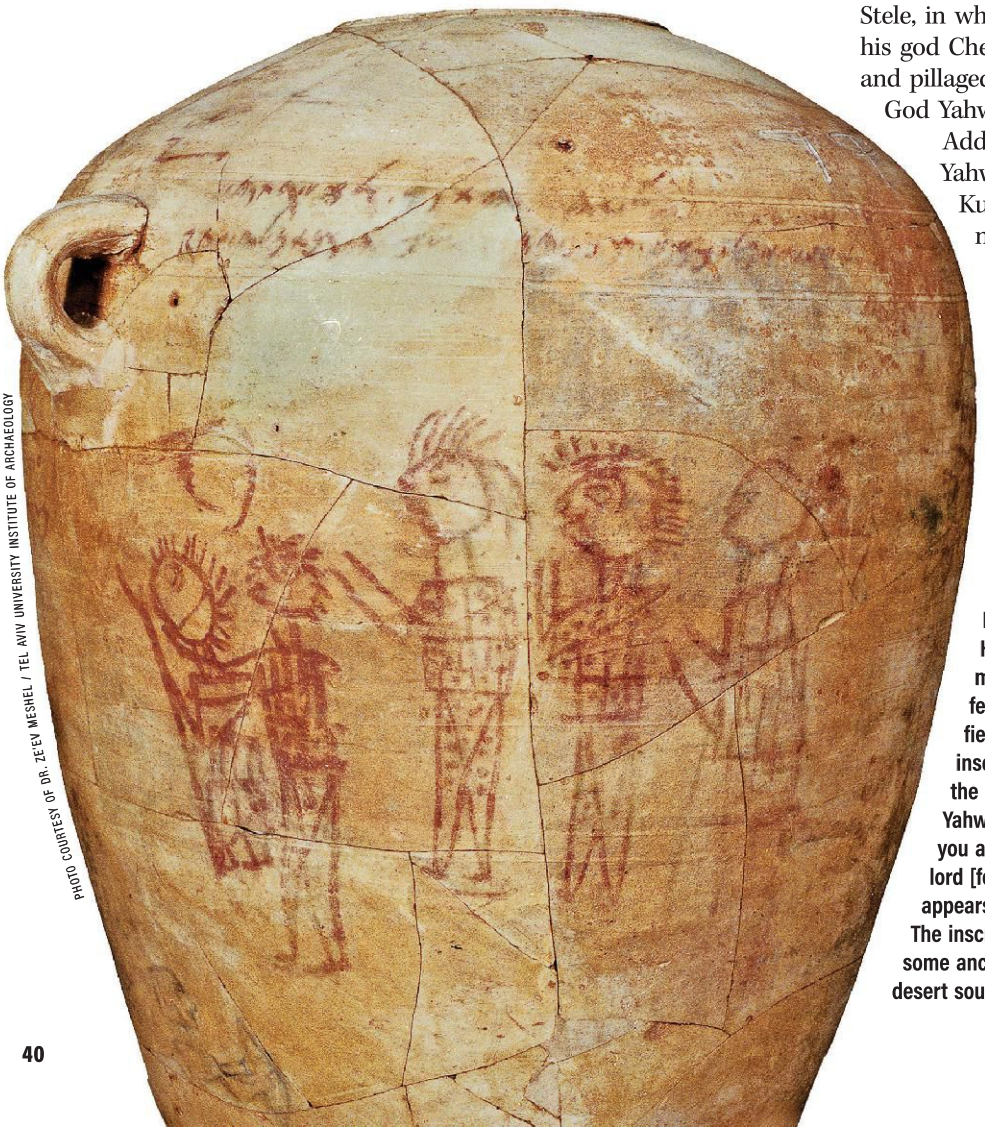

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. ZE'EV MESHEL / TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

DESERT WORSHIP. At the desert site of Kuntillet 'Ajrud in northeastern Sinai, several Hebrew inscriptions have been found that mention the Israelite God Yahweh. This pithos features five standing human figures, identified by their raised arms as worshipers. An inscription (not pictured) written to the right of the scene reads, in part, "I have blessed you by Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah. May he bless you and may he keep you and may he be with my lord [forever]." Here, as in the Hebrew Bible, Teman appears to refer to the desert regions south of Judah. The inscription, therefore, provides evidence that some ancient Israelites associated Yahweh with the desert south.

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ARAD TEMPLE. This tiny room was the most sacred part of a small temple, first built in the eighth century B.C.E., excavated at the site of Tel Arad in the northern Negev. It once held a limestone stela with traces of red pigment, two smaller stone slabs, and two altars. Many believe the standing stones served as aniconic representations of the deity or deities worshiped at the temple, one of whom may have been Yahweh. Replicas of the stones and altars have been reconstructed at Arad (right), while the original pieces have been moved to the Israel Museum.

"Yahweh of Samaria" and "Yahweh of Teman." In these texts, Yahweh appears as the patron deity of the Northern Kingdom (Samaria) but is also associated with Teman, which was a generic term used for the south. As such, Yahweh of Teman is best understood as the southern manifestation of Israel's God, "Yahweh of the Southland."

Kuntillet 'Ajrud's location at the crossroads between the southern Levant, northern Arabia, and Egypt left it open to a mixture of diverse cultural and religious elements. For example, a drawing from a storage jar found at the site depicts two standing figures with features derived from Egyptian and Levantine iconography, but mixed with bovine imagery. Another drawing depicts five figures standing in a line with their arms raised, probably Yahwistic worshipers in procession. Notably, their pose and features resemble those of the "adorant" figures attested in the Qurayyah painted pottery and the rock art found at Timna.

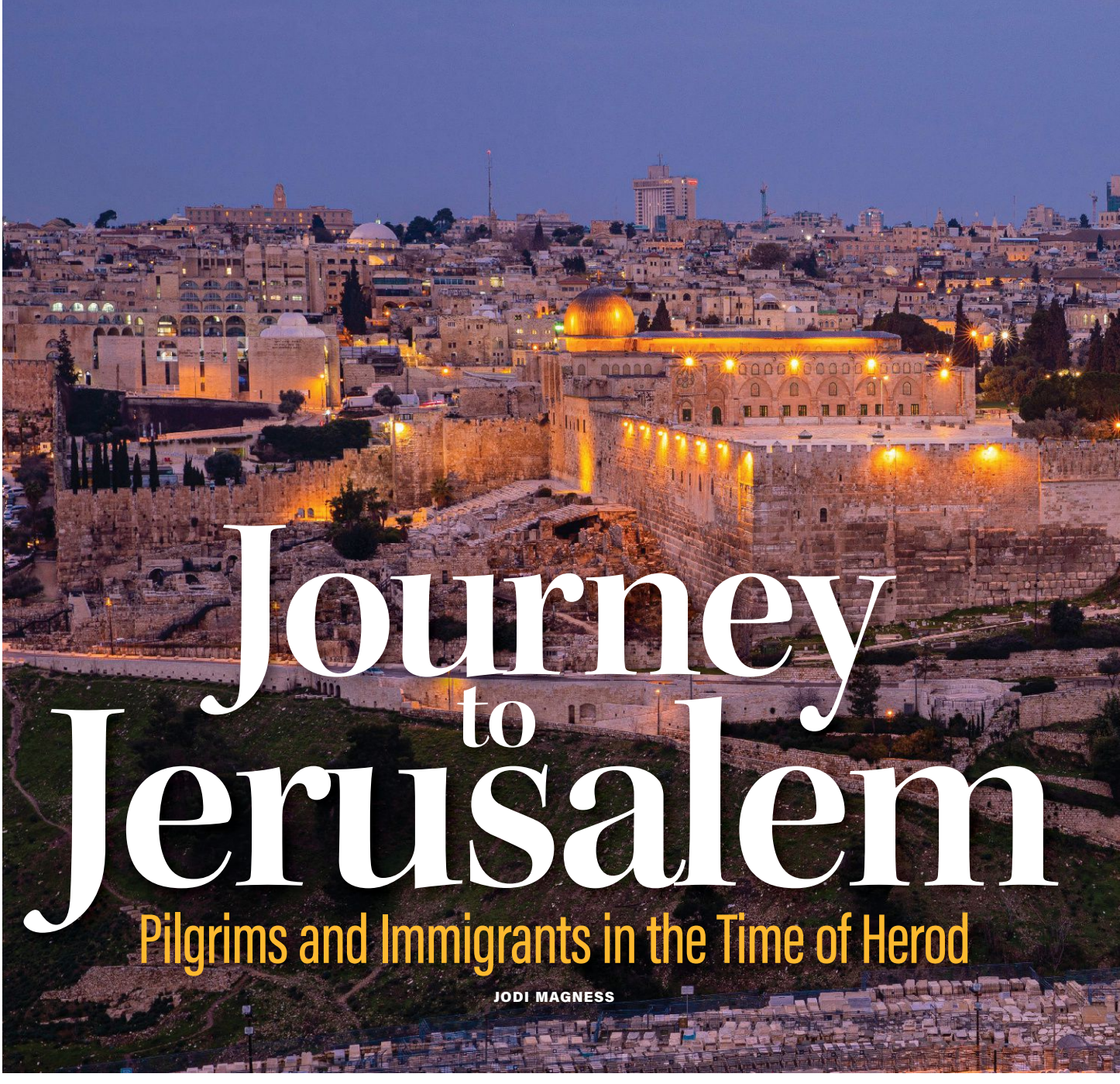
Kuntillet 'Ajrud was not the only site in the desert south that was visited for sacred worship. Recovered pottery shows that dozens of ancient cairns in the central Negev and northeastern Sinai were routinely visited during the Iron Age. Such funerary sites and monuments continued to be the focus of ritual travel and commemoration that were eventually incorporated into Israelite cultic practice.

A final piece of evidence for the influence of desert religious practices in the cult of ancient Israel comes from the small shrine discovered at Tel Arad in the northern Negev. The shrine, which was established in the mid-eighth century, possibly as a shrine to Yahweh, features one or more standing stones within the innermost room ("holy of holies"). These stones, following in the long tradition of standing stones erected at southern cultic sites, likely functioned as aniconic representations of Yahweh and perhaps other gods who were worshiped at the site.

Admittedly, there is still much we do not know about Yahweh's origins. But the available biblical and archaeological evidence clearly indicates that Yahweh originated in the desert lands south of Judah, where pastoral-nomadic peoples across the millennia shared a common set of religious ideas and architecture. Once Yahweh was adopted as Israel's God in the tenth century B.C.E., many important aspects of this long-lived desert cult—including worship of a war and hunting god, aniconism, sacred travel and commemoration, and metallurgy—became hallmarks of Israelite worship and religion.

[1] Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2020), pp. 271–282. For a recent volume with different approaches to the Midianite Hypothesis, see Juan M. Tebes and Christian Frevel, eds., *The Desert Origins of God: Yahweh's Emergence and Early History in the Southern Levant and Northern Arabia*, Entangled Religions 12.2 (Bochum: Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 2021).

[2] See Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).



Journey to Jerusalem

Pilgrims and Immigrants in the Time of Herod

JODI MAGNESS

WHEN THE FIRST JEWISH REVOLT erupted in 66 C.E., Jerusalem was dominated by the Second Temple, which had been rebuilt by Herod the Great in the second half of the first century B.C.E. The thousands of pilgrims who flocked to the Temple included large numbers of Jews from outside the Roman province of Judea. Some of these pilgrims ultimately settled in Jerusalem and made it their home, others gained positions of status and authority, and many made the city their final resting place.

Both textual and archaeological evidence give vivid testimony to this diverse Diaspora community, including the individuals and families who immigrated, the places from which they came, and their impact on the city.

We know from historical and literary sources—including Josephus, the New Testament, and the Mishnah—that Diaspora Jews were well represented in Jerusalem by Herod's time, thanks to his promotion of immigrants, particularly from Egypt and Babylonia, to positions of priestly authority. According to Josephus, Herod first appointed the Babylonian Hananel to the high priesthood (*Antiquities* 15.22), followed by the Egyptian Jeshua son of Phabi, who himself was then replaced by Simon son of Boethus, an Alexandrian Jew (*Antiquities* 15.322). Herod even took Simon's Egyptian daughter, Mariamne, as his wife. From the Mishnah, we also learn that

JOHN DAMBIK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

POPULAR DESTINATION. Just as today, Jerusalem was home to diverse communities in the late Second Temple period (first century B.C.E. to first century C.E.). Burial practices—then and now—shed light on the city's population. In this photo, taken from the Mt. of Olives, some burials are visible, including a Jewish cemetery (foreground), a Muslim cemetery (along the eastern wall of King Herod's Temple Mount platform), and ancient Jewish burial monuments (e.g., the top of Absalom's Pillar, likely constructed in the first century C.E., appears at lower right).

the famous first-century C.E. Jewish sage Hillel, who established an influential religious school in Jerusalem, emigrated from Babylonia (*Sifre Deuteronomy* 357).

The New Testament contains numerous references to Diaspora Jews living in Jerusalem, including well-known figures, such as Paul (Saul) of Tarsus; Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26); Barnabas (Joseph), "a Levite, a native of Cyprus" (Acts 4:36); and Nicolaus, a proselyte from Antioch (Acts 6:5). More broadly, however, the Book of Acts lists Jews from various foreign lands who were living in Jerusalem in the first century:

> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem … Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents

DORON MENDELS / BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.

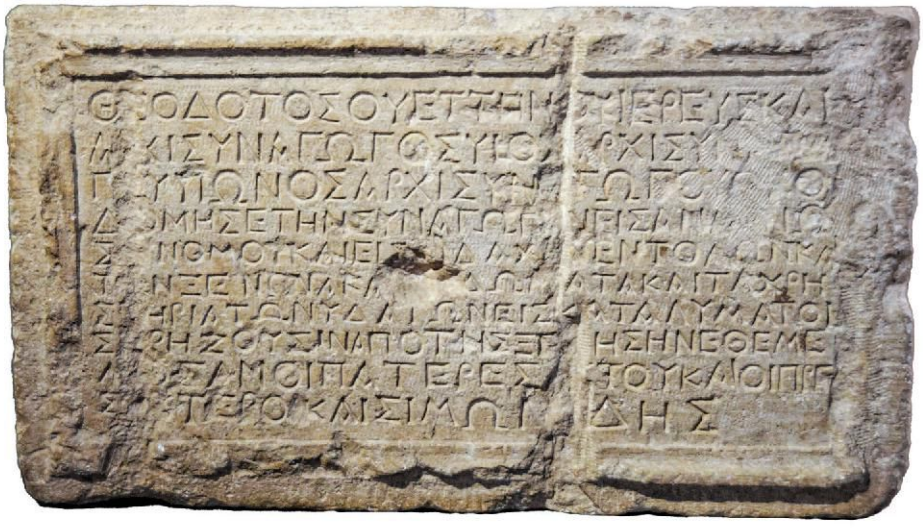
(Acts 2:5–11)

It is against these textual sources that we can better understand and interpret the varied archaeological evidence for Jerusalem's Diaspora Jewish communities, which includes monuments and rock-cut tombs, building and funerary inscriptions, and inscribed ossuaries.

Among the more striking pieces of archaeological evidence for Jerusalem's Diaspora Jewish community is a stone block inscribed in Greek that was found during early excavations in the City of David. The inscription, which was discovered in a dump along with other architectural fragments, commemorates a synagogue built by Theodotos son of Vettenos:

> Theodotos son of Vettenos, priest and *archisynagogos*, son of an *archisynagogos*, grandson of an *archisynagogos*, built the synagogue for the reading of the law and teaching of the commandments, and the guesthouse and the (other) rooms and water installations(?) for the lodging of those who are in need of it from abroad, which (= the synagogue) his forefathers, the elders and Simonides founded.

Presumably, the building associated with the inscription was located nearby and was destroyed in 70 C.E. Although Theodotos is a common Greek name, Vettenos is thought to be Latin, suggesting he was from an immigrant family, perhaps originally from Rome or the Italian peninsula. The fact that Theodotos was a



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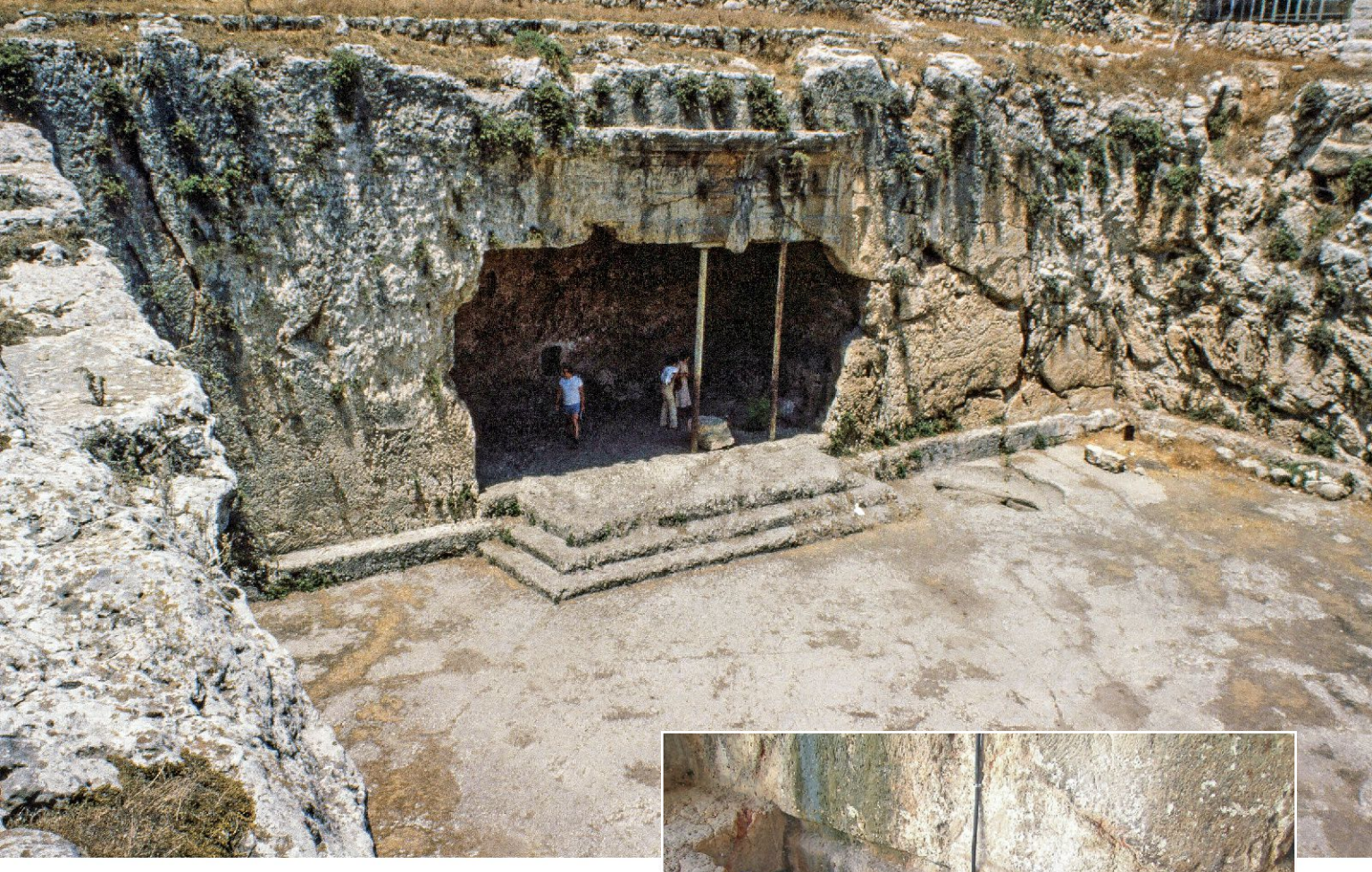
ALL-INCLUSIVE SYNAGOGUE. The Theodotos Inscription describes a synagogue with guest accommodations for visitors from abroad. Theodotos is named as the priest and synagogue head responsible for building the synagogue to teach the law and to accommodate needy sojourners. His father, Vettenos, bears a Latin name, which suggests that he may have originally come from Rome or Italy. Found in Jerusalem in 1913, the inscription dates to the first century C.E. and measures about 2 by 1.5 feet. It can be viewed at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem.

CARL RASMUSSEN / HOLYLANDPHOTOS.ORG



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ROYAL RESTING PLACE. The "Tomb of the Kings" in Jerusalem is one of the city's most elaborate tombs. Dating to the first century C.E., the funerary complex has a courtyard and grand entrance (above), once topped with three pyramids, as well as a large staircase and ritual pool. A rolling stone (at right) blocks the subterranean entrance to the tomb, and the interior includes multiple burial chambers and two hidden passageways. Most scholars believe the tomb was the final resting place of Queen Helena of Adiabene. Helena converted to Judaism and moved from Adiabene, a kingdom in upper Mesopotamia (now northwestern Iraq), to Jerusalem, where she lived for many years with other members of the royal family.

priest and a third generation *archisynagogos* (a Greek title meaning "head of the synagogue") and had the means to dedicate a synagogue indicates this was an elite family. While it remains unclear if Theodotos's synagogue served an exclusively immigrant or Diaspora congregation, like the "synagogue of the Freedmen" mentioned in Acts 6:9, the inscription clearly indicates the widespread presence of foreign, Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem during the first century.

The royal house of Adiabene (a small kingdom located on the upper Tigris River in northern Mesopotamia) was perhaps the most illustrious Diaspora Jewish family in first-century C.E. Jerusalem. Helena, the queen of Adiabene, was a convert to Judaism. Following the death of her husband Monobazus in about 30 C.E., she along with several other members of the royal family moved to Jerusalem, while her son Izates, also a Jewish convert, succeeded to the throne of Adiabene. Helena was a generous benefactress who provided the people of Jerusalem with food during a famine (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.51–53), and she is also commemorated in the Mishnah for her donations to the Temple, which included a golden candelabra that hung above the Temple's doorway (*m. Yoma* 3:10).

According to Josephus, Helena's palace was in the vicinity of the Akra, a second-century B.C.E. Seleucid fortress built just south of the Temple Mount (*War* 6.355). Since 2007, excavations in

NICANOR'S TOMB. A large tomb complex on Jerusalem's Mt. Scopus contained an ossuary for Nicanor of Alexandria, a prominent Diaspora Jew who donated two bronze gates to the Temple. The complex features five burial chambers and a pillared entry porch (see remains of pillars, above).

the Givati Parking Lot at the northwest end of the City of David have brought to light the basement rooms of a monumental building dating to the late Second Temple period, which some propose is Helena's palace.* The massive walls are built of huge fieldstones, some weighing several hundred pounds. Fragments of colorful frescoes found in the collapse indicate that the upper stories were richly decorated, while pieces of columns belonging to the building were incorporated into a later structure above.

Helena returned to Adiabene soon after Izates's death. When she died soon thereafter (c. 60 C.E.), her son and Adiabene's new king, Monobazus, "sent her bones and those of his brother to Jerusalem with instructions that they should be buried in the three pyramids that his mother had erected at a distance of three furlongs from the city of Jerusalem" (*Antiquities* 20.95). Josephus mentions that the tomb of Helena was located outside Jerusalem's Third Wall, the city's northernmost line of fortification during the first century C.E.

In 1863, a French explorer named Louis Félicien de Saulcy began excavations at the tomb of Helena, which he believed was the tomb of the kings of ancient Judah.** The tomb is a huge complex with an enormous courtyard hewn out of bedrock accessed via a monumental rock-cut staircase. The burial chambers are located on the courtyard's west side, with a porch that originally had two columns, a decorated architrave, a

* R. Steven Notley and Jeffrey P. García, "Queen Helena's Jerusalem Palace—In a Parking Lot?" **BAR**, May/June 2014.

** See Andrew Lawler, "Who Built the Tomb of the Kings?" **BAR**, Winter 2021.

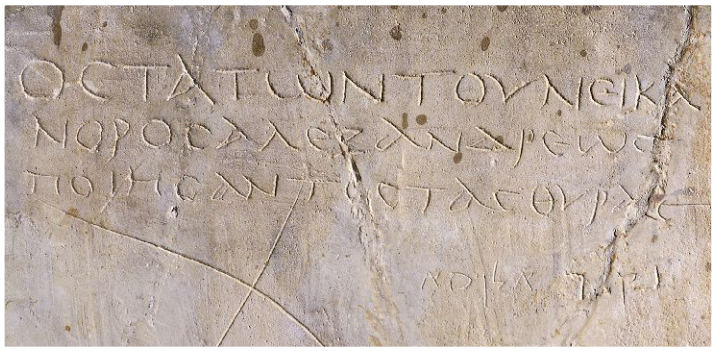
COURTESY NATHAN STEINMEYER

Greek-style Doric frieze, and three monumental pyramidal markers above. The tomb's interior chambers contained 50 burial niches, and the innermost room, which is aligned with the center of the porch façade, may have contained the burial of Queen Helena. The names Sada and Sadan, both meaning "the Queen," were inscribed in Aramaic on one of the sarcophagi found by de Saulcy, who reported that a woman's skeleton dressed in a garment adorned with gold disintegrated when the sarcophagus was opened.

Another prominent Diaspora Jew in first-century C.E. Jerusalem was Nicanor of Alexandria, who donated a set of bronze gates to the Temple. Unlike the other gates of the Temple, Nicanor's were left ungilded to commemorate a miracle that reportedly occurred while they were being transported by sea from Alexandria. According to the story, while navigating through a storm, sailors threw one of the gates overboard to lighten the ship's load, though Nicanor held fast to the other, refusing to jettison it into the sea. The storm then ceased immediately, and when the ship reached port at Akko, the first gate miraculously resurfaced (*t. Kippurim* [*Yoma*] 2:4).

In 1902, an extensive tomb complex, which features a pillared entry porch and five interior burial halls with numerous burial niches (loculi), was discovered on Mt. Scopus. The elaborate tomb was well designed and expertly carved.[1] One of the seven ossuaries found in the tomb bears a Greek inscription, "The ossuary of Nicanor of Alexandria, who made the gates," followed by the Aramaic inscription "Nicanor the Alexandrian."

The so-called Akeldama tombs—three burial caves on the western slope of the Kidron Valley—have also provided abundant archaeological and epigraphic evidence for prominent Diaspora Jewish families in late Second Temple Jerusalem.[2] Each of the caves contains three to



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MAKER OF THE GATES. Nicanor's ossuary (below), found within his tomb complex on Mt. Scopus, has been moved to the British Museum. It bears a bilingual inscription (right). The first three lines, written in Greek, say, "The ossuary of Nicanor of Alexandria, who made the gates." The smaller fourth line of Aramaic writing says, "Nicanor the Alexandrian."

TOMBS IN THE FIELD OF BLOOD. Three burial caves, located in Akeldama ("field of blood" in Aramaic), where Judas Iscariot supposedly died (Acts 1:18–19), shed light on Jerusalem's Diaspora population. The caves, each with multiple burial chambers, contained 40 ossuaries and a sarcophagus, some of which were inscribed. The names in these inscriptions imply a Syrian origin for the families. The Ariston Family Tomb (opposite) is decorated with a ceiling rosette and incised geometric panels. Three burial niches are visible, the middle of which has an arch carved above it.

four chambers with several burial niches and recesses for interred remains. The most elaborate of the tombs—known as the Ariston Family Tomb after the names inscribed on the ossuaries found inside—features a burial chamber adorned by a recessed frame topped by an arch, and a pivoting, paneled stone door that could be closed and locked. The chamber was decorated with incised geometric panels painted in red and architectural elements carved in low relief. The unique decorative features of the Akeldama tombs and the high quality of workmanship suggests they belonged to some of Jerusalem's most affluent Jewish families. But were these Jewish families local to Jerusalem, or did they originally come from elsewhere?

Forty ossuaries and one sarcophagus were found in the three burial caves, some decorated and some inscribed, mostly in Greek. The names in the inscriptions suggest that the families buried in the three caves were related and came from Apamea and Selucia in Syria. These include three ossuaries inscribed in Greek and Aramaic with the names of Ariston and his two daughters, Shelamzion and Shalom. Ariston's ossuary is also inscribed in Aramaic "Yehuda the proselyte," indicating that at least one convert—possibly Ariston himself—was buried in the tomb. Intriguingly, this Ariston could be the same person who is mentioned in the Mishnah as bringing firstfruits to the Temple: "Ariston brought his firstfruits from Apamea and they accepted them from him, for they said: He that owns [land] in Syria is as one that owns [land] in the outskirts of Jerusalem" (*m. Hallah* 4:11).

Another burial cave associated with Diaspora Jews was discovered in the early 20th century just north of Jerusalem near Nahal Atarot. The single-chamber burial cave with loculi on two levels contained more than 30 ossuaries, the majority of which are inscribed. Sixteen are in Greek, five are in Aramaic, and four are in Palmyrene. The names are Jewish, Greek, Latin, and Palmyrene, among others. One individual was a priest named Shamaya. Three places are mentioned in the inscriptions: Chalcis, Alexandria, and Seitos. The place names and Palmyrene inscriptions point to a north Syrian origin for the family or families interred in the tomb, while a wall inscription, which is painted in Greek above one of the loculi, states that the niche held "the bones of those who emigrated" to settle in Jerusalem.[3]

We can see, therefore, that tombs associated with Diaspora Jews are dispersed throughout Jerusalem. Some of them belonged to immigrant families, while others contained the remains of individuals who apparently married into local families. The tombs of Helena and Nicanor and the Akeldama tombs are among the largest and most conspicuous in Jerusalem's funerary landscape, suggesting that their owners sought to make a statement about their standing within local Jewish society.

We should remember, however, that almost all the available written and archaeological evidence relates to Diaspora Jews who were part of Jerusalem's wealthy elite. Lower-class Diaspora Jews, though largely invisible in the literary and archaeological records, must also have been present in Jerusalem. One piece of evidence is a list of payments to workers inscribed in Hebrew on an ossuary lid from the Mt. of Olives, which includes two Galileans and a Babylonian.[4] This inscription shows that immigrants were represented among different socioeconomic groups within the city.

Clearly, late Second Temple period Jerusalem was a cosmopolitan city filled with Jewish pilgrims and immigrants from abroad. These Diaspora Jews supported and participated in the Temple cult and were integrated into various aspects of everyday life in Jerusalem, including adopting the local burial customs. At the same time, many maintained ties to their homelands, native languages, and customs through membership in immigrant synagogue congregations. Not surprisingly, it was the wealthiest and most prominent immigrants, such as Queen Helena, who had the greatest impact on the city's landscape and on the lives of its residents.

[1] Amos Kloner and Boaz Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), p. 179.

[2] See Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut, *The Akeldama Tombs, Three Burial Caves in the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem*, IAA Reports 1 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1996).

[3] See David Noy and Hanswulf Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, vol. III, *Syria and Cyprus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 33–35, 231–232.

[4] See Hannah M. Cotton et al., *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae Palaestinae* 1.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 681–686.

GARO NALBANDIAN

Taking a Sling

How David Defeated Goliath

BOYD SEEVERS AND VICTORIA PARROTT

EVERYBODY KNOWS THE BIBLICAL STORY of David and Goliath. Most will even recall that the young shepherd used a sling to take down the Philistine champion, with a single cast of stone (1 Samuel 17). But how credible is this episode? What do we know about how ancient slings were made, what ammunition was used, how far and accurately they could shoot, and how much damage they could inflict?[1]

David's sling was not what we today call a "slingshot"—a Y-shaped stick or other implement to which are attached two elastic cords and a pouch, and which propels an object by stretching and releasing the cords. By contrast, a typical ancient sling was a pouch with a long cord attached at each end, made from some durable, flexible, but non-stretchable material. While holding both cords, the slinger placed an object in the pouch and then created centrifugal force by whirling the sling overhead or to the side. Releasing one cord then launched the projectile through the air.

Throughout history, people have made slings from some type of flexible, natural material—typically from animals (hair, wool, leather) or plants (hemp, flax). Logically, David would have woven his sling from the wool of the sheep he was herding, and his sling may have followed the simple, classic pattern of a woven pouch connected to two cords. Often, one cord ended in a loop that the slinger slid over a finger on the slinging hand, so that when the other cord was released, the sling stayed attached to the hand.

Made of organic materials, most ancient slings decomposed over time, leaving only artistic and literary evidence to inform us about their

ALBUM / BRITISH LIBRARY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

DAVID AND GOLIATH. The biblical story of a lowly shepherd defeating a formidable warrior (1 Samuel 17) has become a metaphor for facing and overcoming seemingly impossible odds. David allegedly needed a single stone to knock down the Philistine giant Goliath. Is that credible? Archaeological evidence and literary sources confirm the wide use of slings among ancient warriors and armies, who understood all too well their lethal capabilities. The above image comes from the late 13th-century manuscript of *The Northern French Hebrew Miscellany*, now in the British Library.

construction. Only a handful of ancient slings have survived, such as examples preserved in the arid conditions of Egypt.

Although the Bible and other ancient texts often mention slingers and slinging, they rarely indicate anything about technique. For example, when David fought Goliath, the text simply says, "David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead" (1 Samuel 17:49). Fortunately, ancient paintings and reliefs offer some clues about methods of slinging.

Some pictures appear to show slingers whirling the sling horizontally over their heads, as depicted in an early 12th-century B.C. relief from the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu where an Egyptian slinger casts from a crow's nest atop the mast of a ship, engaged in a naval battle with the Sea Peoples. By contrast, other pictures seem to show slingers whirling their slings vertically at their sides, like the Assyrian and Judahite slingers portrayed in the famous Assyrian reliefs of the battle of Lachish in 701 B.C. (see p. 53).*

* Hershel Shanks, "Destruction of Judean Fortress Portrayed in Dramatic Eighth-Century B.C. Pictures," **BAR**, March/April 1984.

Just as we find apparent variety in ancient slinging techniques, so we find a variety of slinging ammunition. The most common sling projectile throughout history has likely been the common fieldstone. However, fieldstones are usually irregular in shape, which often causes them to curve when cast. Thus, as early as the late Neolithic period (c. sixth millennium B.C.), people were shaping sling ammunition out of stone and clay to make it more uniform and aerodynamic.

Shaped, spherical sling stones first appear in the Early Bronze Age (c. 3300–2000 B.C.). In Israel, these were typically fashioned from locally available flint or limestone, usually to a size of 2–3 inches in diameter (about the size of a plum or baseball). Although such shaped stones appear frequently in the archaeological record of Bronze and Iron Age Israel, they are rarely mentioned in texts. The Hebrew Bible, however, includes a rare reference to military production of this type of sling stone in the Kingdom of Judah during the eighth century, saying, "[King] Uzziah provided for all the army … the stones for slinging" (2 Chronicles 26:14).

The ancients also produced sling ammunition from clay as far back as the sixth millennium B.C., as evidenced by finds from northern Mesopotamia. Pure clay, used without chaff or other forms of temper, is dense, easily worked, and makes for good sling ammunition. Clay projectiles were typically sun dried and generally weighed around 1–2 ounces.

Another common type of sling ammunition was brook stones—natural stones rounded by water in streambeds or along shorelines. Such stones fly straighter than irregular fieldstones, which David would have known when he "chose five smooth stones from the wadi [streambed]" as his ammunition before facing Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40).

During the later Hellenistic and Roman periods, sling pellets were also molded from lead. Lead pellets were often shaped like an almond or miniature football and usually weighed 1–2.5 ounces. Many of them bore symbols, such as scorpions, or mocking messages, such as "for Pompey's backside."

Whatever their type of ammunition, some of history's most famous armies, including those of Sennacherib and Julius Caesar, included well-trained slingers. The earliest mention of organized military slingers is in Judges 20:16, with its reference to the 700 left-handed Benjaminites who "could sling a stone at a hair, and not miss."* By the time of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, armies commonly used slings in battle. In fact, when Israel attacked the Moabite fortress of Kir-hareseth, the biblical writers describe the battle by simply saying, "Slingers surrounded and attacked it" (2 Kings 3:25).

Despite their value, slingers sometimes commanded little respect by other ancient troops, as the simple sling was often viewed as a poor man's weapon. Well-armored and well-armed infantrymen, who fought hand-to-hand,

* Boyd Seevers and Joanna Klein, Biblical Views: "Left-Handed Sons of Right-Handers," **BAR**, May/June 2013.

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SLING. Excavated in the workmen's village at al-Lahun in the Egyptian Fayyum, this simple weapon dates to the 12th Dynasty (1939–1760 B.C.). It is made of woven fiber with a pouch and long cords at either end, one of which has a loop to fit around a finger.

ASSYRIAN SLINGERS deployed during Sennacherib's siege of the fortified Judahite city of Lachish in 701 B.C. The scene is part of an extensive set of gypsum panel reliefs from the Assyrian capital of Nineveh that celebrated Sennacherib's military victories and exploits. This section of the relief shows slingers whirling their weapons vertically at their sides, propelling their stones toward Judahite defenders stationed atop the walls of the city (shown in an adjacent panel). The reliefs are now on display in the British Museum in London.

commanded more respect. Goliath's disdain for David (1 Samuel 17:42–44) may reflect this common disrespect of slingers.

Just how effective were ancient slingers? Often extremely effective. Numerous authors attest to the range and accuracy of slingers, as well as their ability to inflict damage.

How far could the ancients sling effectively? In the fourth century A.D., the Roman military writer Vegetius (*Epitoma* 2.23) recommended that Roman slingers and archers practice using targets at a distance of around 600 feet (200 yards), suggesting that they could learn to hit a person at that distance. Writing in the fourth century B.C., the Greek historian Xenophon commented that Rhodian slingers could double the range of Persian slingers (*Anabasis* 3.3.16), which suggests they may have been able to reach distances of up to 400 yards when slinging at massed troop formations. All this suggests that practiced slingers could have had military effectiveness as far away as 200–400 yards. By comparison, the modern record for slinging distance stands at 550 yards.

Ancient authors and modern tests suggest that a skilled slinger can achieve a very high degree of accuracy at closer range. The Roman historian Livy (first centuries B.C./A.D.) claimed

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SLING PROJECTILES ranged from rough stones gathered from the field to expertly crafted balls of worked stone, dried clay, or cast lead. This pile of rounded stones represents a fraction of all of the sling stones found at Lachish, where, in 701 B.C., such ammunition was used by both the conquering Assyrian army and the city's Judahite defenders. Made of hewed limestone, each ball measures around 2 inches in diameter and weighs about half a pound.

that Achaean slingers "would wound not merely the heads of their enemies but any part of the face at which they might have aimed" (*History of Rome* 38.29.7), calling to mind David's successful cast to Goliath's forehead. A modern ethnographic study notes that Arabian slingers hunt game at 30–50 yards, which likely provides an upper limit for the range at which David could have attacked Goliath.

All this shows the formidable capabilities of the sling, but how did it compare with other projectile weapons? The simplest projectile weapon is a hand-thrown stone, which has an effective range of up to 25 yards. Modern tests show that javelins have an effective range of just over 20 yards. Ancient texts suggest that archers had ranges similar to those of slingers, except that archers could be highly accurate even farther than slings, at up to 70 yards. Thus, since Goliath's longest-distance weapon was a javelin, his range for engaging David was only about half of that of his underdog challenger.

When it comes to speed and lethal force, the sling's centrifugal force enables a moderately skilled slinger to launch a projectile at speeds of up to 113 mph and inflict great damage. The Roman medical author Celsus (first centuries B.C./A.D.) wrote that wounds from slings were more dangerous than wounds from arrows, because of the internal damage caused by the blunt force (*On Medicine* 5.26). Accordingly, the biblical account of David defeating Goliath describes the bone-breaking force of David's cast by noting that his stone "sank into [Goliath's] forehead" (1 Samuel 17:49).

Historical sources and modern tests agree that in well-trained hands, the sling is a formidable weapon capable of inflicting a significant amount of damage. Because of their simple design and ammunition, slings were a convenient weapon used by people throughout the ancient world, and rather than merely serving as a useful implement for shepherds or hunters, their range, accuracy, and ability to inflict damage made them an excellent option for a highly accurate or long-range weapon in ancient warfare.

In light of these observations, we can better understand the biblical story of a shepherd skilled with a sling who defeated a highly trained Philistine warrior. Goliath wore armor and was limited by the range of his javelin, and he expressed disdain for his unarmored, simply armed foe. David bore a simple sling and used rounded stones from the nearby streambed for his ammunition. Yet David's sling provided him the decisive advantage of staying out of range of his opponent's weapons while still allowing him to hit Goliath's forehead with enough force to penetrate his skull, so he could take down the giant and then finish him off with his own sword, thereby winning the battle.

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ALMOND-SHAPED AMMUNITION. Slingers of the Hellenistic and Roman periods introduced lead pellets, which were produced using a mold. These projectiles often featured symbols or inscriptions, such as this example from Athens that taunts, in high relief, "Take that!" (*dexai*, in Greek), and carries a winged thunderbolt on its opposite side. It measures 1.5 inches in length and weighs about 3.5 ounces.

[1] This article is based on the evidence and arguments presented in Boyd Seevers and Victoria Dennis, "Slinging in the Biblical World: And What We Can Learn About David Defeating Goliath," *Near Eastern Archaeological Society Bulletin* 63 (2018), pp. 1–12.

Magdala's Mistaken Identity

JOAN E. TAYLOR

VISITORS TO ISRAEL TODAY regularly make a stop at Magdala, a site located about 4 miles north of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. Excavations in recent decades have revealed an ancient port city with remarkable remains from the Hellenistic and Roman periods, including two of the earliest and best-preserved synagogues ever uncovered in Israel. Many have even suggested that this impressive Jewish city was the hometown of Mary Magdalene,* Jesus's famous disciple, and that Jesus may have first encountered Mary at one of the site's synagogues.

Many scholars agree, however, that in the first century, the Galilean port city now under excavation was actually called Taricheae, a city best known from the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, who was frequently based at the port while serving as a general during the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 C.E.).[1]

So how did Taricheae, one of the largest Jewish cities on the shores of the Galilee, come to be called Magdala? Before answering this question, let's first examine what we know of both Taricheae and places called Magdala in Roman Galilee.

Taricheae is mentioned by several Roman authors of the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E., as well as by Josephus.[2] According to Josephus, the city, which had a population of

* See Marcela Zapata-Meza and Rosaura Sanz-Rincón, "Excavating Mary Magdalene's Hometown," **BAR**, May/June 2017.

MAGDALA on the shores of the Sea of Galilee is a popular tourism and pilgrimage site many associate with Mary Magdalene. Recent excavations have identified the remains of a thriving first-century port city that included a large harbor with warehouses and extensive public baths, as well as a fish-salting facility and two synagogues. The evidence suggests, however, that this is not Mary's hometown but rather the far better documented Taricheae.

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THE SYNAGOGUE discovered at Magdala in 2009 is a rather modest hall lined with stone benches. Unlike other first-century synagogues, however, it has floors paved with mosaics. The rectangular block, found in the center of the hall and known as the Magdala Stone, is decorated with beautifully carved reliefs, which some believe are representations of features from the Jerusalem Temple.

about 40,000, was protected by walls and secure gates and even had a hippodrome. He gives its location as 30 stadia (about 4 mi) from Tiberias (*Life* 157). As such, we can almost certainly locate Taricheae 4 miles north of Tiberias at the archaeological site known today as Magdala.[3]

And, indeed, what we know of Taricheae does correspond with what has been uncovered during the recent excavations.[4] It was a large and wealthy city, with two synagogues, significant commercial operations, and a large harbor. The harbor appears to have been established in the second century B.C.E. and thrived for several hundred years until the site was largely abandoned by c. 270 C.E. The earthquake of 363 C.E. further devastated what remained of the town, and, as we will see, its fortunes revived only a century or more later when Christian pilgrims began flocking to Galilee in search of holy places.

But while history and archaeology tell us a great deal about Taricheae, we know very little about a Galilean town or village that would have been known as Magdala in the first century. Indeed, Magdala (Hebrew: *Migdal*), which simply means "the tower" in Aramaic, was a common place name in the lands of the Bible, typically given to places that local tradition associated with towers or fortifications. Both in the Bible and in later Christian and rabbinic literature, we find many towns and locations named for towers: Migdal Eder ("Tower of the Flock"), Migdal Tsebayya ("Tower of the Dyers") and Migdal El ("Tower of God"), to name a few. Given that

MARY MAGDALENE is captured in this painting by Constantin Tzanes (1633–1685) sitting by the empty tomb with her attribute, a vessel of ointment.

such names were often shortened to Magdala (or Mugdal or Mogdala, depending on local pronunciation), there was understandably much confusion when it came to identifying and differentiating between them in ancient writings.

No contemporary early Roman sources mention a town called Magdala on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee. However, both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds—the two major collections of Jewish oral law and commentary written down between the third and sixth centuries—do reference the existence of one Magdala—Migdal Nunayya, or "Tower of the Fish"—in very close proximity to Tiberias. In the Babylonian Talmud, for example, Migdal Nunayya is located precisely one *mil* (2,000 cubits, or the allowable distance of a Sabbath day's journey, just over half a mile) from Tiberias (*b.Pesahim* 46a). In the Jerusalem Talmud, this village, shortened to Magdala, is similarly located on the immediate outskirts of Tiberias. In one story, the second-century rabbi Shimon bar Yohai is said to have "passed in front of the synagogue of Magdala" immediately after his departure from Tiberias (*Pesiqta of Rab Kahana* 11.16), while a story in the Jerusalem Talmud notes that the two locations were so close that their courtyards were even connected (*y.Ma'aserot.* 3.1 [50c]).

What do we take from all this? During the first few centuries C.E., the only "Magdala" recorded along the shores of the Sea of Galilee was Migdal Nunayya, a village located about half a mile from ancient Tiberias. This village was clearly not Taricheae, a significant port city situated 4 miles north of present-day Tiberias at the site we know today as Magdala.

Mary's Towering Nickname

JOAN E. TAYLOR

Despite many claims to the contrary, it is not at all clear that Mary's nickname, "the Magdalene," indicates that she was from a place called Magdala, which simply means "the tower" in Aramaic. In a recent article I wrote with Elizabeth Schrader, we looked at how the name "Magdalene" was understood in early Christian writings.[1] We discovered that some authors indeed thought the term indicated Mary's provenance from a village called Magdala or Magdalene (see, e.g., Origen, *Series Commentary on Matthew* 141; Eusebius, *Ad Marinum* 2.9), but they did not seem to know where it was, while others thought of it as a nickname indicating that Mary was a "tower" of faith (see Jerome, *Epistles* 127).

Debate about the name continued through the centuries, even as some Western pilgrims began to visit the Galilean site of Magdala. But even for those early Christian writers like Origen and Eusebius who considered "Magdala" as Mary's place of origin, none associated it with an important city on the shores of the Sea of Galilee—and certainly not with Taricheae. Mary was identified as a simple, village woman from some obscure location, a notion that would fit Migdal Nunayya on the outskirts of Tiberias, but other places as well. As such, while we might well stop, pause, and remember her at modern Magdala, we must also remember that ancient Taricheae was almost certainly not her birthplace.

[1] Elizabeth Schrader and Joan E. Taylor, "The Meaning of 'Magdalene': A Review of Literary Evidence," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 140 (2021), pp. 751–773.

A.D. RIDDLE / BIBLEPLACES.COM

FOUNDED BY HEROD ANTIPAS in 19 C.E., Tiberias was an important cosmopolitan center only 4 miles south of Taricheae. Its Roman-style theater, located at the foot of Mt. Berenice, was discovered in 1990, and subsequent excavation revealed it could seat more than 7,000 spectators. The city also included a royal palace, bathhouses, and synagogues. According to early Jewish sources, just beyond the gates of Tiberias was the small village of Migdal Nunayya, the only place on the Sea of Galilee that may have been called Magdala in the first few centuries C.E.

To return to our initial question, when and how did ancient Taricheae come to be known as Magdala?

In the fourth century, Roman Palestine came under the dominion of the Christian emperors of Byzantium who identified and developed the region's holy sites for pilgrimage.* Numerous tourists came to Palestine looking for places where they could pray and remember biblical people and events. Pilgrimage routes were established and many churches built.

At about this time, we see a curious shift in some early copies of the Gospel of Matthew, where a place called "Magadan" along the shores of the Sea of Galilee (see Matthew 15:39) gets changed to "Magdala." This shift seems to have been fueled by a growing acceptance among some early Christians that Mary Magdalene must have come from a place called Magdala (see "Mary's Towering Nickname," p. 57). By the sixth century, this "Magdala" had been identified and developed as a pilgrimage destination. A German pilgrim named Theodosius, for example, indicates that Magdala was equidistant between Tiberias and Heptapegon (identified in the fourth century as the site of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, known today as At-Tabgha). This is where the modern site of Magdala is located. Indeed, this Magdala is frequently mentioned in Christian pilgrimage accounts from the Byzantine through Crusader periods.

This literary testimony of the site as a pilgrimage destination correlates well with Magdala's archaeology and later history. Excavations have revealed the remains of a Byzantine monastery and associated bathhouse, an eighth-century church with mosaic floors, and a later Crusader church dated by an inscription to 1389. The site's harbor was also rebuilt during the Byzantine period and subsequently reused and refurbished in the early Islamic and Crusader periods. The site eventually became known by the Arabic name Al-Majdal and continued to exist as a small fishing village on the shores of the Sea of Galilee into the 20th century.

The site we know today as Magdala, therefore, surely traces its name to the fifth or sixth century, when the site was resettled and developed as a Byzantine monastery and destination for Christian pilgrims seeking the birthplace of Mary Magdalene. Exactly how and why ancient Taricheae came to be known as Magdala remains unclear. It seems plausible that early Christians borrowed the name Magdala from the Jewish village of Migdal Nunayya just north of Tiberias, perhaps in an effort to link their newly established monastic community to a well-known and revered figure from the life of Jesus.

* See, e.g., Benyamin Storchan, "A Glorious Church for a Mysterious Martyr," **BAR**, Fall 2021.

[1] Some scholars think Taricheae was also known as Magdala already in Roman times, but there is no evidence for this. The identification relies on conflating different rabbinic "Magdalas" and suggesting Taricheae had an unattested different name. See, e.g., Richard Bauckham, ed., *Magdala of Galilee: A Jewish City in the Hellenistic and Roman Period* (Waco, TX: Baylor Univ. Press, 2018), pp. 345–361; Uzi Leibner, *Settlements and History in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Galilee*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 127 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 214–237.

[2] See, e.g., Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.45; Cicero, *Letters* 12.11; Pliny, *Natural History* 5.71; Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Titus 4:3; Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.20; 20.159; *War* 1.180; 2.252; *Life* 32.

[3] Although most scholars argue for Taricheae's location north of Tiberias, others place it south of Tiberias. See, e.g., Nikos Kokkinos, "The Location of Tarichaea: North or South of Tiberias?" *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 142 (2010), pp. 7–23.

[4] See Marcela Zapata-Meza et al., "The Magdala Archaeological Project (2010–2012): A Preliminary Report of the Excavations at Migdal," *'Atiqot* 90 (2018), pp. 83–125; Richard Bauckham and Stefano De Luca, "Magdala As We Now Know It," *Early Christianity* 6 (2015), pp. 91–118.

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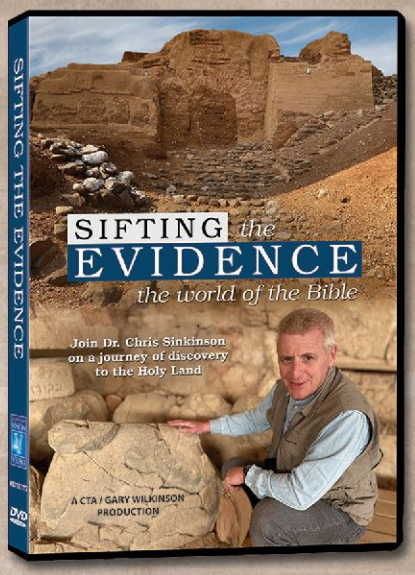

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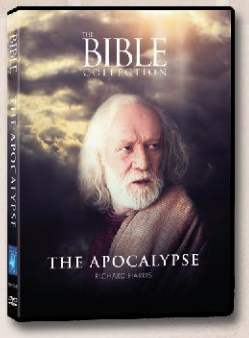

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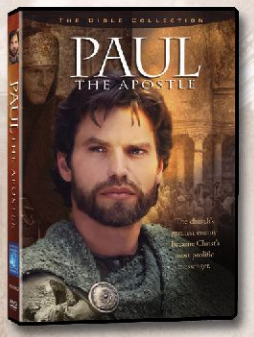

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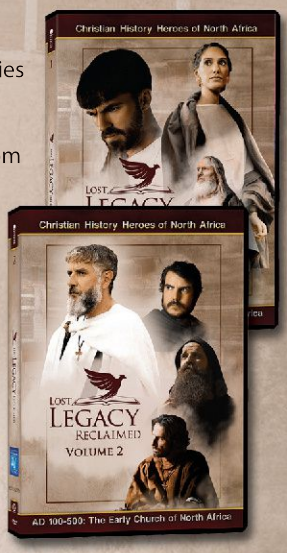

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Why Leah Gives Birth Before Rachel

KRISTINE HENRIKSEN GARROWAY

THE BIBLICAL STORIES of barren women highlight the serious problem of childlessness in the ancient world. Infertility meant no child to love, to help with daily work, to provide for you in the afterlife, or to inherit land, money, or goods. Most important, without children there would be no one to replace the current generation. For a woman not to have any children posed a problem, both for herself and her husband. Couples navigated fertility issues in a number of ways, some of which were more reliable than others: prayer, magical practices, adoption, surrogacy, and at times a second wife.

Throughout the ancient Near East, a woman's womb was considered closed until divinely opened. Fertility was in the hands of the gods.

Jacob Meeting Rachel (1853) by William Dyce.

BPK BILDAGENTUR / HAMBURGER KUNSTHALLE / ELKE WALFORD / ART RESOURCE, NY

Similarly, the Israelites believed that God was in control of the womb. Texts such as Isaiah 54:1–3 praise God for opening wombs and providing children to the once-barren woman. In the barren women narratives, God opens the woman's womb at key moments in the story. Sarah was able to conceive only after God made the point that the promised child would come from Abraham's loins and Sarah's womb. Rebekah conceives after Isaac prays and beseeches God on her behalf. Hannah conceives after she makes a vow to God.

But what of Rachel? How are we to understand the timing of her first pregnancy?

Rachel desperately desires a child. She cries out to Jacob in anguish, "Give me children or I shall die" (Genesis 30:1).

In light of ancient Near Eastern beliefs about fertility, Jacob's reply comes as no surprise. He retorts, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (Genesis 30:2). Rachel must continue to wait. But why? The key narrative motivation for opening Rachel's womb is not so obvious.

An answer to this mystery can be found hiding in the strange circumstances surrounding Rachel's marriage. In brief: Jacob fell in love with Rachel and wished to marry her. He went to her father, Laban, and asked for her hand in marriage. He agreed to work seven years for Rachel (Genesis 29:18). Laban appears to agree when he says, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man" (Genesis 29:19). When Jacob serves for seven years, he demands that Laban give him his wife. Laban does so, but it is his other daughter, Leah, who weds Jacob, not Rachel! Laban's excuse is that it is the custom of the land to marry the eldest daughter before the younger daughter. Rightfully upset at this duplicitous trick, Jacob demands to be given his intended wife, Rachel. Knowing that he has Jacob on the hook, so to speak, Laban agrees—if Jacob will promise to serve him another seven years, then Rachel can be his bride after the wedding week of

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The Code of Hammurabi, 18th century B.C.E.

Leah is complete (Genesis 29:21–27). Jacob agrees and marries two sisters within the span of two weeks (Genesis 29:28–30).

Biblical marriage customs reflect an ancient Near Eastern setting where specific steps must be taken to contract a marriage. Unlike today, where couples can make marriage decisions on their own, in ancient times the decision was traditionally made between men. When a couple was to be married, the groom and bride's father would contract a marriage agreement. Most of these were oral agreements that were solemnized by an oath and the exchange of valuables or goods, such as furniture, clothing, textiles, jewelry, servants, or land. The gifts the groom agreed to bring was called a *mohar* in Hebrew (e.g., Genesis 34:12). The agreement and exchange of goods underscored both the economic aspect of marriage and the strengthening of social kinship bonds.

The importance of the marriage contract and the binding nature of these agreements is seen in various ancient law codes. The 20th-century B.C.E. laws of Eshnunna state: "If … he arranged for a marriage contract and libation [symbolic action] with her father and mother and took her, she is a wife; the day she is caught with [another] man she shall die; she shall not live." The 18th-century B.C.E. laws of Hammurabi state: "If a man took a wife and did not arrange for her marriage contract, that woman is not a wife."

Marriage agreements, whether written or oral, were very important, legally binding contracts. Both parties had to fulfill their terms of the agreement. Once the agreement was made, there was a waiting period (betrothal) to allow for the terms of the agreement to be met. For example, sometimes a girl might be betrothed for marriage when she was a child. In this case, the couple must wait until she was of marriageable age. In other cases, the groom might need some time to gather the wealth he had promised to the bride's family.

Ancient Near Eastern marriage contracts help illuminate the marriages of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. Looking closely at the contracts reveals the importance of the marriage events' timing. Jacob commits to Laban that he will work seven years for the hand of Laban's daughter. Jacob did not have any wealth to offer when he made the marriage agreement, so the marriage was delayed. Jacob's labor was his gift. This works well for the timing of his first marriage. His marriage to his first wife (Leah) takes place when the marriage gifts have been paid. Unfortunately, Jacob does not marry the daughter he expected, and he must re-enter negotiations to marry Rachel. Jacob agrees to work another seven years. However, his marriage to Rachel takes place not seven years later, when the bride-price is paid, but seven days later! How could this be?

Some ancient Near Eastern marriage contracts stipulate that the marriage can take place before the bride-price has been paid in full. In these contracts, the bride-price is paid in installments. However, the final installment must be paid before the birth of the first child. According to Genesis 29, both Rachel and Leah live with Jacob in an intimate relationship, but only Leah bears children. Genesis 29:31 suggests God opens Leah's womb right away because she is unloved. Rachel must wait.

It is not until Leah has seven children that God remembers Rachel, and she bears her first son (Genesis 20:20–24). Reading the story in light of the surrounding culture in which it arose provides another possible way to understand the narrative and birth of Leah and Rachel's children. Leah has children right away because Jacob has fulfilled his marriage contract obligations. His seven years were served before they were married. However, Rachel's son is born only after Jacob served for seven more years:

> When Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you."
>
> (Genesis 30:25–26)

Jacob's request to leave coincides with the birth of Rachel's first child. This is the key moment in Rachel's narrative. The text subtly relays that her son, Joseph (who will grow up to save the Israelites), like Leah's children, is born after the terms of her marriage agreement have been fulfilled. Jacob, the father of the Israelites, remains a man of his word, and Joseph is established as a legally legitimate child.

HOW MANY?

How many signs are found in the Egyptian hieroglyphic script?

ANSWER ON P. 68

The Origins of the Gospels

ROBYN FAITH WALSH

WE SHOULD NOT TAKE anything for granted when investigating the beginnings of early Christian history. This includes our best source of information on Jesus's life and teachings—the Gospels themselves.[1]

Traditional academic approaches to the canonical Gospels—the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—tend to emphasize that they were produced by and for specific Christian communities. References to the "Markan" or "Matthean" churches, for example, are commonplace. Differences between various gospels are often scrutinized as evidence for each group's unique perspective or collective identity.

This understanding of Christian origins suggests that the gospel authors served as literate spokespersons tasked with recording oral stories that their fellow Christians had passed down over generations. While some scholars propose that the gospel writers may have read portions of one another's work, others look to similarities between the Gospels as confirmation that there was a common source for these texts, if not in the historical Jesus, then perhaps in some long-lost, written collection of Jesus's sayings.* Still, the central focus of these studies is that the gospel writers served as documentarians for their respective Christian communities.

The trouble is that reconstructing these hypothesized early churches on the basis of clues in the Gospels alone is an incredibly fraught task. And no one can agree on what these communities actually looked like! We have little idea whether they were large or small, rich or poor.

Meanwhile, the authors themselves say next to nothing about their motivations for writing. Only Luke tells us that he was commissioned, like many others before him, by a wealthy patron to write a reliable version of Jesus's life story (Luke 1:1–4). Although Luke's preface may seem to offer a promising lead, it turns out that his explanation isn't unique among first-century Greco-Roman authors.

Likewise, none of the Gospels looks all that different from other kinds of writing from the Roman imperial period. Yet no one seems to ascribe community authorship to writers such as Virgil, Philo, or Plutarch. The fact that the Gospels contain language and themes found in other writings of the time, including novels, philosophy, histories, and biographies, only further complicates matters.

Given this broader literary context, we can look at known conventions and constraints of authorship in the first and second centuries as a starting point for reconstructing the probable social worlds of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John.**

When we do, we quickly realize that the level of literate skill we find in the

PETER HORREE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

MUSE OF HISTORY. This painting fragment decipts Clio, the muse of history. It comes from the villa of Julia Felix Roman in Pompeii and dates to the first century C.E.

* Eta Linnemann, "Is There a Gospel of Q?" *Bible Review*, August 1995.

** For more on the authorship of these books, see Mikeal C. Parsons, "Who Wrote the Gospel of Luke?" *Bible Review*, April 2001; Robin Griffith-Jones, "The Un-Gospel of John," *Bible Review*, February 2002.

Gospels was exceptionally rare in the ancient world. Moreover, given that so few people in the Greco-Roman period were literate or wealthy enough to write and publish, authors usually worked within small networks of fellow writers. These groups regularly circulated, discussed, and interpreted their writings much like contemporary authors do today. They were even known to compete openly with one another!

Authors might have revealed in their works certain aspects of shared language, culture, politics, and lived experience, but with respect to genre, content, and publication, they remained bound to the conventions of their craft in their historical moment. They often alluded to one another's writings, to popular and canonical works, including Homer and Plato, or to sacred literature, such as the Hebrew Bible.

Although I don't doubt that the gospel authors knew some fellow Christ-followers in their social circles, writing networks were a more formative influence on ancient writers in terms of determining the content and form of their narrative prose. The similarities—and differences—between the Gospels weren't necessarily a function of preserving the oral speech of hypothesized early Christian groups, but possibly evidence of authors engaging with one another as they each wrote their own biographies about Jesus. There is also evidence that the Gospels were read outside of narrow Christian circles, including by satirists such as the author of the *Satyricon*, which contains, among other things, stories about funerary meals, anointings, crucifixions, empty tombs, and a number of other motifs found in the Gospels.

The Gospels should be viewed as writings not outside literate culture but at its center in the first centuries C.E. The Jesus of the Gospels can be fruitfully compared with the Cynics, Aesop, the pastoral heroes of the Greek novel, or witty underdogs in the biographical tradition. The gospel writers use references to common literary trends to convey Jesus's special standing, but they do so through familiar literary allusions. The empty tomb, for instance, is found throughout Greek and Roman literature to indicate someone had risen to divine status (e.g., Plutarch discusses the motif at length, citing the missing Alcmene, Aristeas of Proconnesus, Cleomedes the Astypalaean, and Romulus, calling it an established mythic tale among writers and one that "all the Greeks tell" [*Life of Romulus* 28.4]).

So what does all of this mean for the "origins" of early Christianity and the early Christians?

We may need to recalibrate our expectations for what the Gospels represent as historical documents and what we assume about the social networks of those who wrote them. Instead of huddled masses of illiterate Christians seeking a spokesperson, we may have the creative reimaginings of Jesus's life at the hands of skilled literate craftsmen, both using and inverting the expectations of ancient biography to tell the story of a remarkable and subversive teacher and miracle worker. That these writings were later taken up by certain Christian groups and leaders is a testimony to their success, and that literary success may, in fact, have been what attracted followers to the movement in the first place.

ALFREDO DAGLI ORTI / ART RESOURCE, NY

FOUR GOSPELS. This fifth-century mosaic shows a bookcase with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It comes from the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, Italy.

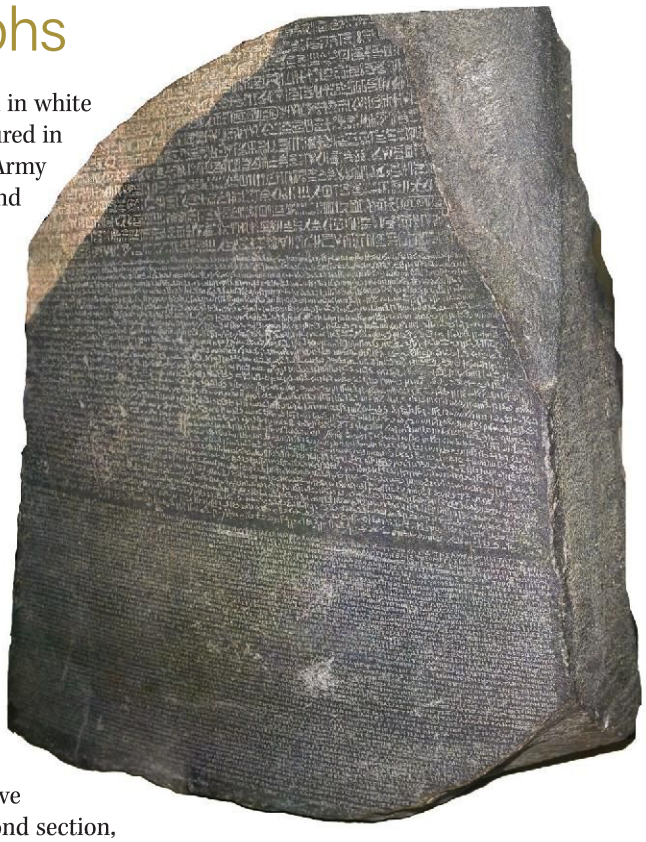
[1] See Robyn Faith Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament Within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2021).

THIS FALL'S

GREAT READS

The Rosetta Stone

Key to Egyptian Hieroglyphs



THE ROSETTA STONE refers to a fragmented Egyptian stela discovered near the Mediterranean port city of Rasheed (also known as Rosetta), in the western Nile Delta. Inscribed in three different languages, the famed artifact contributed significantly to the decipherment of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and the language of the pharaohs (see p. 20). Originally set up in a temple dedicated to King Ptolemy V (r. 204–180 B.C.E.), the stela is now on display in the British Museum in London.

The chance discovery of the stela took place in July 1799, during the French occupation of Egypt. Napoleon's army was clearing debris around the 15th-century fort known locally as Borg Rasheed, to prepare defensive positions against arriving British forces, when they found a massive block of stone with one side that was polished and completely covered with about a hundred lines of engraved writing.

The exciting find was shipped to the Institut d'Égypte in Cairo, a scientific institution established by Napoleon to carry out research, study, and publication of Egypt's natural and cultural riches. After their defeat, the French forfeited the stela to the victorious British. The prized find was then loaded on a ship for England in February 1802. It spent a year in the Society of Antiquaries of London, from where it was transferred to the British Museum, where it remains to the present day.

The stone, which is made of grandiorite—a hard, dark gray, volcanic rock—weighs a whopping 1,675 pounds and measures 3.7 feet tall, 2.5 feet wide, and nearly a foot thick. The stela was discovered incomplete, however, and the bottom right corner and almost one third of the top are lost, together with the relevant parts of the inscription. A modern English inscription is painted in white on either side: "Captured in Egypt by the British Army in 1801" on the left and "Presented by King George III" on the right side.

The preserved portion of the inscribed text gives a priestly decree commemorating the first anniversary of the coronation of Ptolemy V, in the spring of 196 B.C.E. It opens with a long list of titles and epithets of the Greek-Egyptian king, who is celebrated for his religious piety and love for Egypt. In the second section, the Egyptian priests enumerate all the benefits the king has conferred upon Egypt. The last part proclaims how the king should be honored in the temples throughout the land. The inscription closes with the command that the decree is to be engraved on stelae and publicly exhibited in temples across Egypt.

Presented in three languages (Middle Egyptian, Demotic, and Greek) in three successive bands, the text was intended to proclaim the monarch's achievements in the sacred hieroglyphic script as well as the two administrative tongues of the empire. However, none is preserved completely, as only 14 incomplete lines of the calculated 29 original lines of hieroglyphs are extant, and many lines of the other two versions are chipped off at the right margin. The original form of the decree was Demotic, from which it was loosely translated into Greek and hieroglyphic Egyptian.

The Rosetta Stone proved to be the decisive key to deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs. The ability to read ancient Egyptian texts unlocked a wealth of textual and historical sources related to the Bible, including the famed Merneptah Stele, which furnished the earliest mention of a people called Israel, and numerous other accounts that linked Egyptian and biblical history.

Among the many recent books on the subject are the Egyptologist John Ray's *The Rosetta Stone and the Rebirth of Ancient Egypt* (2007) and two popular books: Jed Z. Buchwald and Diane Greco Josefowicz's *The Riddle of the Rosetta* (2020) and *The Writing of the Gods* (2021), by Edward Dolnick. The Digital Rosetta Stone Project (rosetta-stone.dh.uni-leipzig.de) offers digital tools to engage with the artifact.

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Apocalypse Tapestry

Woven in Paris in the 14th century, the Apocalypse Tapestry depicts the events from the Book of Revelation. It is composed of a set of tapestries that together measured 460 feet long. The final book of the New Testament, Revelation prophesies about end times. The apocalyptic events described in it include the judgment of the world and coming of the new heavens and earth. The scene below shows the fall of Babylon, full of demons (Revelation 18). Two angels appear at the top of the scene. The left angel tells the Apostle John (pictured at left) of the destruction. The right angel tells God's people to come out of the wicked city, and four people flee (pictured at right).

Louis I, Duke of Anjou (located in western France), commissioned the tapestry—originally with 90 scenes—around 1380. In 1480, a later duke gave the tapestry to Angers Cathedral. Although parts of the tapestry were destroyed during the French Revolution, much of it survived and was later restored. It can now be viewed at the Castle of Angers.

HEMIS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

HOW MANY? (SEE QUIZ ON P. 61)

Answer: About 1,000 or more

Egyptian hieroglyphic script is composed of a myriad of pictographic signs, some of which can have up to three different functions, depending on context. For example, a picture of a heart can simply represent the word for "heart" (Egyptian *jb*), but it can also be used to convey the same phonetic value in other words (e.g., Egyptian *jby*, "thirsty"). Additionally, the same hieroglyphic sign can be used as an unpronounced determinative that serves to clarify the meaning of the word that it follows. For example, the "heart" sign is used after the Egyptian word *ḥ'ty*, which is a synonym for heart.

Such a complex writing system produced a script that had an exceedingly large number of signs—over 1,000 in the Old Kingdom (2543–2120 B.C.E.). The number of hieroglyphs dropped to about 750 during the Middle Kingdom (1980–1760 B.C.E.) but then grew substantially during the Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.E.), when Egyptian scribes engaged in cryptography, exploring creative ways to convey obscure puns and puzzles. This practice resulted in up to 8,000 unique hieroglyphic signs that we find in Ptolemaic and Roman-era inscriptions.

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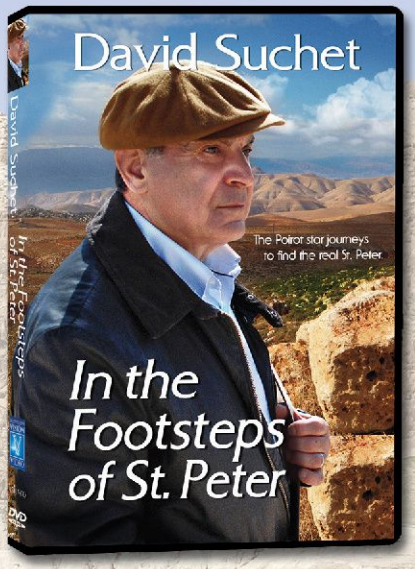

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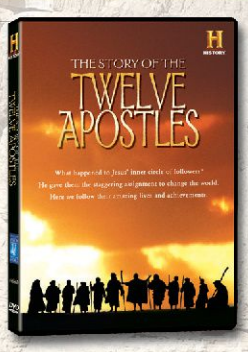

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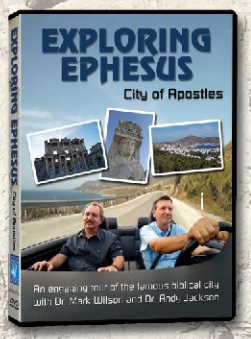

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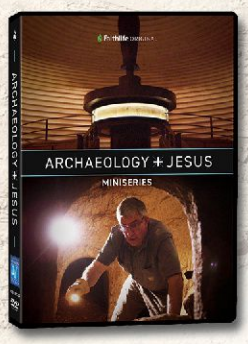

No place on earth has arrested the attention of adventurers and archaeologists like the Holy Land. But does what we dig up in Israel bear resemblance to the stories about Jesus in the Gospels? Explore the process of archaeology with the top experts digging in Israel today. Along the way you'll join New Testament scholar Dr. Craig Evans as he reveals groundbreaking finds that illuminate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. 87 minutes.

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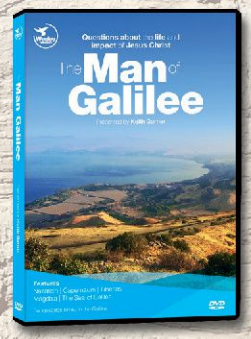
The Man of Galilee



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Kristine Henriksen Garroway (p. 60) is Visiting Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible at Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles. Her areas of research include the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern history and archaeology.

Signe M. Hægeland (p. 23) is a graduate student of the Old Testament and a research assistant for the Lying Pen of Scribes project.

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Victoria Parrott (p. 50) is a teaching and research assistant at the University of Northwestern. She focuses on archaeology and exhibit design.

Mladen Popović (p. 25) is Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Judaism and the head of the Qumran Institute at the University of Groningen. He directs the ERC project The Hands that Wrote the Bible.

Boyd Seevers (p. 50) is Professor of Old Testament Studies at the University of Northwestern. He is an expert on ancient warfare, biblical geography, Hebrew language, and archaeology.

Joan E. Taylor (p. 55) is Professor of Christian Origins and Second Temple Judaism at King's College London. She covers early Judaism and Christianity.

Juan Manuel Tebes (p. 32) is Professor at the Catholic University of Argentina and Researcher at the National Research Council. He specializes in the history and archaeology of the Iron Age southern Levant and northwestern Arabia.

Robyn Faith Walsh (p. 62) is Assistant Professor at the University of Miami. Her work focuses on early Christianity, ancient Judaism, and Roman archaeology.

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ERIC CARLSON

"Big fish?! The ticket said Tarshish!"

PATRICIA ERBELE
HESPERIA, CALIFORNIA

Thank you to all those who submitted caption entries for our Spring 2022 cartoon (left), based on Jonah 1:17: "But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." We are pleased to congratulate Patricia Erbele of Hesperia, California, who wrote the winning caption, and our runners-up:

RUNNERS-UP

"But the ad said, 'Have a whale of a time for three days and three nights!'"

SUSAN STARK
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Jonah may have looked like a tempting morsel to the fish, but three days later he would find out that you can't keep a good man down.

FRANK SCHIPANI
WHITE LAKE, MICHIGAN

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"'Go sailing,' they said. 'It'll be fun,' they said."

MALINDA KAYE DILDAY
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

"Remember Tarshish's posted laws: Catch and Release Only!"

RON WIEBE
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

For additional caption entries, as well as past cartoons and captions, please visit **biblicalarchaeology.org/captioncontest**.

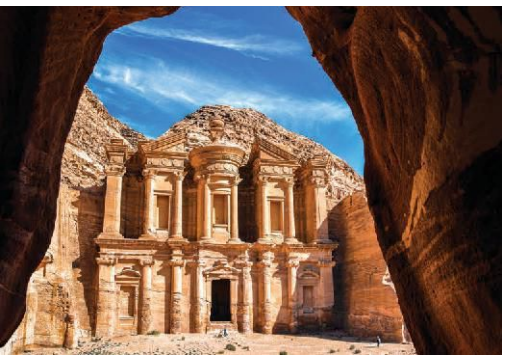
Write a caption for the cartoon (right) based on Joshua 6:8: "As Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Lord went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them." Submit it via our website at **biblicalarchaeology.org/captioncontest**.

Please include your name and address. The deadline for entries is November 15, 2022. The author of the winning caption will receive a BAS All-Access membership and three gift subscriptions to give **BAR** to friends. Runners-up will receive an All-Access membership and two gift subscriptions for friends.

ERIC CARLSON

Joshua 6:8

Journeys of a Lifetime in the Bible Lands



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