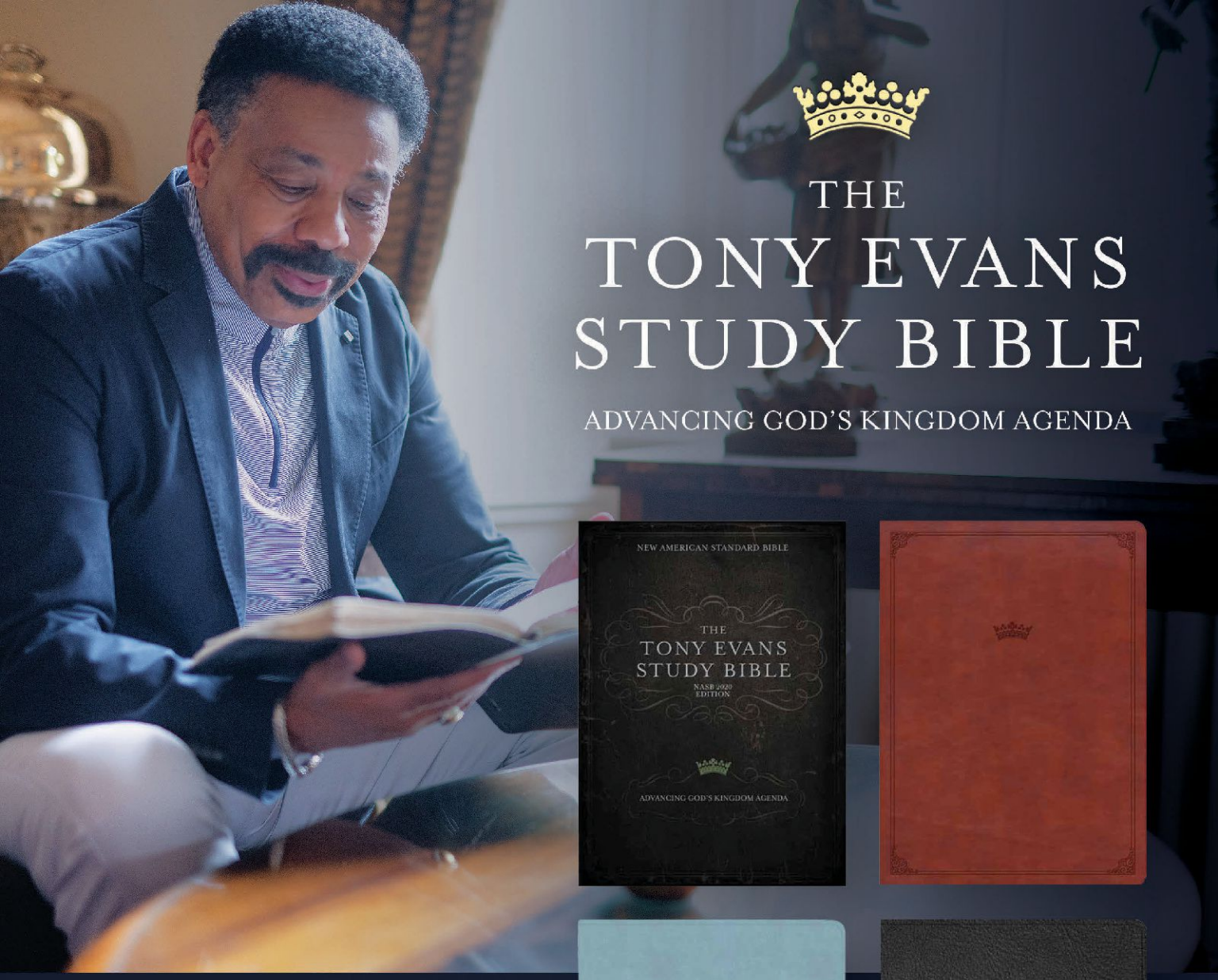
SUMMER 2023 • VOL 49 NO 2

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW

How the **Maccabees** Made a Kingdom



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BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW
VOL. 49 NO. 2
SUMMER 2023

FEATURES

ON THE COVER: Kedesh, a site in northern Israel, served as a busy administrative center for the Ptolemies in the third century and then for the Seleucids in the second century BCE. Around 150 BCE, it was abruptly abandoned, along with other sites in the region. This power vacuum contributed to the rise and spread of the Hasmonean kingdom.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE TEL KEDESH EXCAVATIONS / SHARON HERBERT & ANDREA BERLIN, DIRECTORS

32 The Rise of the Maccabees

Andrea M. Berlin

The Maccabees created an independent Jewish kingdom in the second century BCE. Their success was a testament to their zeal—and some significant external factors. The Book of 1 Maccabees tells the story of their rise, while archaeology places the story within a larger historical and political context. Tour the region, previously controlled by a long list of empires, that became Maccabean territory.

40 David and Solomon's Invisible Kingdom

Zachary Thomas and **Erez Ben-Yosef**

After centuries of excavation, we still have little archaeological evidence for the kingdom of David and Solomon. This has caused some to speculate that their kingdom never existed or existed only on a small scale. Yet another explanation is possible: Their kingdom was composed of a largely nomadic population, whose archaeological remains are nearly invisible.

46 Jerusalem's Temple Treasures: Where Did They Go?

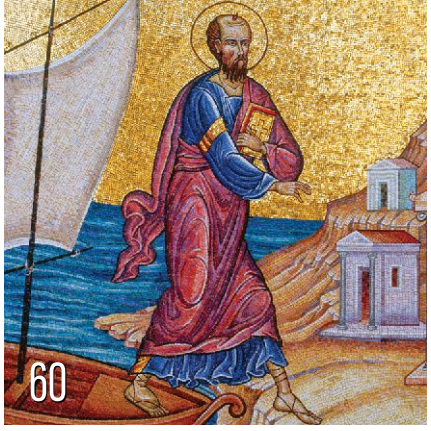
Elena Dugan

According to the Book of Ezra, the looted treasures of Solomon's Temple returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile. An enigmatic Hebrew treatise, however, suggests the precious implements never made it back. Instead, they were reportedly hidden somewhere in Babylonia, waiting to reveal themselves at the coming of the messiah. Explore what the *Treatise of the Vessels* says about the lost treasures of the First Temple.

52 The Amorites and the Bible

Aaron A. Burke

The biblical authors depict the Amorites as one of early Israel's fiercest opponents. Although they are credited with impressive, well-fortified towns and massive monuments, the Amorites are also condemned for idolatry. Who were these legendary figures, why do they receive such pointed condemnation, and how did the landscape of Canaan influence the biblical depiction?



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WEB EXCLUSIVE

Nomadic Biblical Kingdoms

biblicalarchaeology.org/nomads

BAR visited the Timna excavations in southern Israel to talk with director Erez Ben-Yosef about his team's recent studies on the kingdom of David and Solomon. He believes ancient Israel's legendary monarchs ruled over a mixed population of nomads and city dwellers. What is the evidence for nomads in the Bible and in the archaeological record, and how does this change the way we think about the history of the biblical period?

BAR ON THE WEB

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Find Your Summer Fun with BAR

BAR'S SUMMER 2023 ISSUE is the perfect read for your summer adventures, whether you're relaxing on the beach, experiencing the great outdoors, or maybe even getting your hands dirty in an excavation trench in the Holy Land. We've packed this issue with stories, profiles, news, quizzes, and contests that are sure to entertain, inform, and enlighten.

Our cover story, "The Rise of the Maccabees" by archaeologist Andrea Berlin, explores the historical and archaeological evidence for the power politics that lay behind the dramatic rise of the Hasmonean state in the late second century BCE. Then, in "David and Solomon's Invisible Kingdom," authors Zachary Thomas and Erez Ben-Yosef present a bold new theory that the legendary biblical kings did, in fact, rule over a powerful kingdom, but that it was made up largely of archaeologically invisible tent-dwelling nomads in addition to city dwellers and townspeople who would have left behind buildings and monuments.

In "Jerusalem's Temple Treasures: Where Did They Go?" biblical scholar Elena Dugan uncovers a little-known Hebrew text that preserves the intriguing tradition that some of the First Temple treasures were hidden in Mesopotamia following the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. And in "The Amorites and the Bible," archaeologist Aaron Burke examines the Amorites, one of several groups encountered by the Israelites after their arrival in Canaan, and the massive Bronze Age monuments that the biblical writers attributed to this legendary people of gigantic origin.

This issue's Strata brings you the latest news and developments in the world of biblical archaeology, including a profile of two new methodologies that make use of the earth's geomagnetic field to reveal buried buildings and even the precise date of biblical battles. Archaeologist Robert Mullins then analyzes a short Hebrew inscription from Abel Beth Maacah that reveals ancient Israel's northern border in the ninth century BCE. And scholar Jonathan Klawans visits a still-functioning Crusader-era church located just outside of Jerusalem to explore its brilliant frescoes that depict scenes from the life of Jesus.

In Epistles, Zohar Amar uses ancient texts and experimental archaeology to identify *zori*, the mysterious biblical resin grown in the land of Gilead that was used to treat everything from cough to indigestion. David Clausen summarizes what modern biblical scholarship teaches about the historical Paul by addressing five common myths about the apostle, his teachings, and his relationship to the Judaism of his day. We also take a close look at the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Mesopotamian tale that influenced generations of storytellers and writers from across the ancient world.

So wherever your summer plans take you, be sure to pack the latest issue of **BAR**. Between adventuring and relaxing, take some time for yourself and explore the sites and discoveries that continue to reveal exciting new details about the biblical past.—**GLENN J. CORBETT**

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW

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A NOTE ON STYLE: BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era), used by some of our authors, are the alternative designations often used in scholarly literature for BC and AD. Biblical citations come from the NRSV, unless otherwise specified.

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

Is BAR Losing Its Way?

MOST PEOPLE WHO CARE about biblical archaeology do not care about the archaeology of places not mentioned in the Bible or secondhand rehashes of archaeological work done years or decades before. We want to hear about new, spade-in-the-ground archaeology in biblical places by the people doing it. Hershel Shanks figured out how to find that stuff, and if he couldn't get the archaeologists themselves to write, he told us about it in his "First Person" column. If you cannot recover Hershel's focus, you will lose us.

TOM PITTMAN
GRANTS PASS, OREGON

Continuing BAR's Quality Tradition

I HEARTILY APPROVE the outstanding article "Mesha's Stele and the House of David," by André Lemaire and Jean-Philippe Delorme, even though I am clueless about Hebrew and the technical details shown in the photographs. I treasure the full disclosure by the authors, who put their argument out there for critique. That gives me comfort, since over the decades **BAR** has been a place where experts can discuss and debate. Excellent work continuing the quality tradition started by Hershel Shanks.

MAC MILLER
MARTINDALE, TEXAS

*In the Spring 2023 issue of **BAR**, Matthieu Richelle and Andrew Burlingame presented another view on this translation ("Set in Stone? Another Look at the Mesha Stele"). Follow this developing debate online at biblehistorydaily.org.*—**ED.**

Genesis of Judaism

I WAS SURPRISED, to say the least, with what I learned from Yonatan Adler's article "The Genesis of Judaism" and his timeline for the religion's development. In my opinion, the one defining sign of being Jewish is circumcision, which was missing from the article. Does Adler have thoughts on this subject?

JACOB ARZENN
CALABASAS, CALIFORNIA

YONATAN ADLER RESPONDS:

In the first century CE, male circumcision was one of the primary identity markers of Judeans, for whom it was much more—a fulfillment of a divine commandment enshrined in the Torah. However, Judeans were not the only group to practice circumcision, as the Egyptians, Arabs, and Ethiopians also shared the practice at the time. It appears that circumcision was an early cultural practice whose origins are lost in the mists of time and which may well predate the formation of any kind of distinctly Israelite or Judean identity.

I ENJOYED THE EVIDENCE presented by Yonatan Adler. However, his claim that in "all the books of the Hebrew Bible outside the Pentateuch ... ancient Israelite society is never portrayed as keeping the laws of the Torah" is incorrect. There are several references to Sabbath observance in the prophetic books (e.g., Isaiah 58:13–15; possibly 2 Kings 4:23), and it is fairly obvious that the reason Daniel avoids meat and wine in Babylonia (Daniel 1:8) is because he keeps some form of the dietary laws.

BEN ZION KATZ
SKOKIE, ILLINOIS

YONATAN ADLER RESPONDS:

The only three passages outside the Pentateuch to refer explicitly to Sabbath prohibitions (Jeremiah 17:19–27; Nehemiah 10:33; 13:15–22) are presented against a backdrop of the general populace not observing these prohibitions, while Isaiah 58 is prescriptive (not descriptive), and 2 Kings 4:23 concerns some sort of (cultic?) festival. Daniel 1:5–16 is the closest we get to someone observing a dietary restriction, although I question whether any of the Torah's dietary prohibitions are implied here.

AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE, tracing evidence of Judaism to the second century BCE. I wonder, though, why Adler does not attribute the assembly of the parts that would become Judaism to the Judean arrival of the Pharisees at that same time? I've always thought that Judaism was the product of the Babylonian exiles, with a preliminary report coming with Ezra, and the finished product with the Pharisees.

RABBI JOE KLEIN
ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

YONATAN ADLER RESPONDS:

It seems to me that the initial splintering of the well-known late Second Temple period sects (the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Qumran community, etc.) came only after Judean society at large had

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already adopted the Torah as their binding law and began to observe its rules and regulations. The Pharisees were then most likely a product rather than the source of the emergence of Judaism.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION technology might also have had a role in the slow proliferation of Jewish observance. Imagine Ezra's frustration (Ezra 7:1–26; Nehemiah 8) speaking in the open air, without benefit of a Greek theater. His stirring message would only have been heard clearly by the first few rows of listeners. This dilemma, of course, was humorously depicted in the film *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, in which all that was heard of Jesus's "Beatitudes" by one listener in the periphery of the audience was, "Blessed are the cheesemakers."

BERNARD S. MILLMAN
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Judah's Jars

DO ARCHAEOLOGISTS KNOW the labor and cost involved in preparing the storage vessels used in Judah? How much of the workforce was involved in pottery making, and how much land was used to grow the kiln fuel compared to other agricultural activities? It seems possible that the cost of producing the storage jars would have rivaled the cost of their contents. Do we know if any of the vessels were reused to maximize their value?

ALLEN D. HUNTER
YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

Although immense piles of discarded pottery at ancient sites (e.g., Mt. Testaccio in Rome) imply the throw-away mentality, there is some evidence that even transport and storage vessels were regularly reused. (This habit is obvious for tableware and household containers.) Ethnographic observations and Mishnaic texts indicate reuse of storage jars in the ancient Near East. While there are studies for specific sites and uses, there is very little we can say without some more detailed research. A great idea for a future BAR article!—ED.

AS I WAS READING "Enduring Impressions" by Oded Lipschits, a question came to my mind: Why are the storage jars ovoid in shape, with a rounded base? Wouldn't they tend to roll around when transported? Why not a flatter base?

KENNEDY GAMMAGE
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

ARCHAEOLOGIST TIM FRANK RESPONDS: *The jars were carried by donkeys and possibly camels. As shown in ethnographic examples, jars were most likely held in place by rope slings, for which the ovoid shape was better suited. It is also easier to pour contents from ovoid jars. Even in a domestic context, most jars in ancient Judah had an ovoid base. They may have leaned against a wall or against other jars. Some ceramic jar stands have also been excavated.*

Calculating Christmas

WHEN DISCUSSING THE DATE of Jesus's birth ("Calculating Christmas: Hippolytus and December 25th"), why does

author T.C. Schmidt not also address the evidence from Luke 2:8–14? In those verses, the shepherds are tending their flocks in the fields—in December! Much has been said about the improbability of this activity occurring in December due to Judah's foul winter weather.

MARK L. HABERMAN
CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

T.C. SCHMIDT RESPONDS:

Luke 2:8 does say that shepherds "were out in the fields" watching their flocks at night. But the Greek verb agraulein *does not necessarily mean they were simply lying out in the open without shelter; they could have been sheltering under tents, lean-tos, sheds, barns, or whatever else might be in a field. Present-day Bedouins can be observed outside at night with their flocks in wintertime, so we have little reason to suspect that ancient shepherds could not have been doing the same. Therefore, Luke's statement should probably not be read as specifying the season in which Jesus was born.*

Biblical Giants

JONATHAN YOGEV'S ARTICLE "The Riddle of the Rephaim" was enlightening and intriguing. I am curious to know why the concept of the Rephaim is conspicuously absent in the New Testament. Do we know at what point the Rephaim began to disappear from ancient writing and literature?

STEVE RICHARDSON
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

JONATHAN YOGEV RESPONDS:

The concept of the Rephaim was already in the process of disappearing when it entered the Hebrew Bible, where they are either being destroyed or in the underworld. As descendants of god(s), they couldn't be tolerated in most biblical traditions. When mentioned in later periods (Book of Jubilees 29:9–11), the original meaning of the concept was already lost. The lack of evidence for the Rephaim in the New Testament suggests that interest in them had disappeared. Nevertheless, the tradition of Jesus's conception as the son of God shares similarities with the concept of the Rephaim. As in Ugaritic, Phoenician, or Greek culture and myth, a leader with a divine bloodline has greater authority.

I HAVE ALWAYS NOTED how much the Old Testament, like other ancient quasi-historical writings, reflects even older folklore dating back to before the invention of writing. I think it is possible the Rephaim are ancient explanations of findings of Neanderthal or *Homo erectus* skeletons. In days of yore, strange bones (including of dinosaurs and mammoths) were taken to temples to be displayed and then became the basis of various myths.

SUSAN WEIKEL MORRISON
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

An intriguing possibility! To read more about biblical and early Jewish writers' understanding of the fossil remains that they surely encountered from time to time, read Steven and Elisha Fine's "Encounters with Fossil Giants" in the Fall 2021 issue of ***BAR****.*—ED.

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COURTESY MICHAEL EISENBERG

Jessica Rentz, Amit Aharoni, and Erik Luijendijk wash the medallion inscription in the Martyrion of Theodoros.

The People's Church

AS ARCHAEOLOGISTS with the Hippos-Sussita expedition in the Galilee carefully removed dirt from a previously excavated mosaic, they made an unexpected discovery that has opened a window into the lives of everyday Byzantine Christians in the sixth century. The team uncovered two new inscriptions from the mosaic floor of the Martyrion of Theodoros, also known as the "Burnt Church." These, in addition to two they had already identified in the mosaic, give fascinating details about the community members who had gathered their money together for the construction of the simple church building.

The four dedicatory inscriptions provide the names and occupations of the local Christians who lived in the prosperous city of Hippos-Sussita, perched high in the hills just a mile east of the Sea of Galilee. One inscription set in the entrance hall states, "Offering of Megas, the most holy bishop, for the peaceful rest of Eusebios and Iobios, his brothers." Another reads, "Offering of the priest Symeonios, goldsmith, custodian[?], he [the Lord] will protect him and his children and his wife." This inscription is particularly intriguing as it may suggest that the minister of the church was also one of the town's craftsmen.

WHO DID IT?

What famous mystery novelist earned a doctorate in Egyptology and authored two nonfiction books on ancient Egypt?

ANSWER ON P. 24

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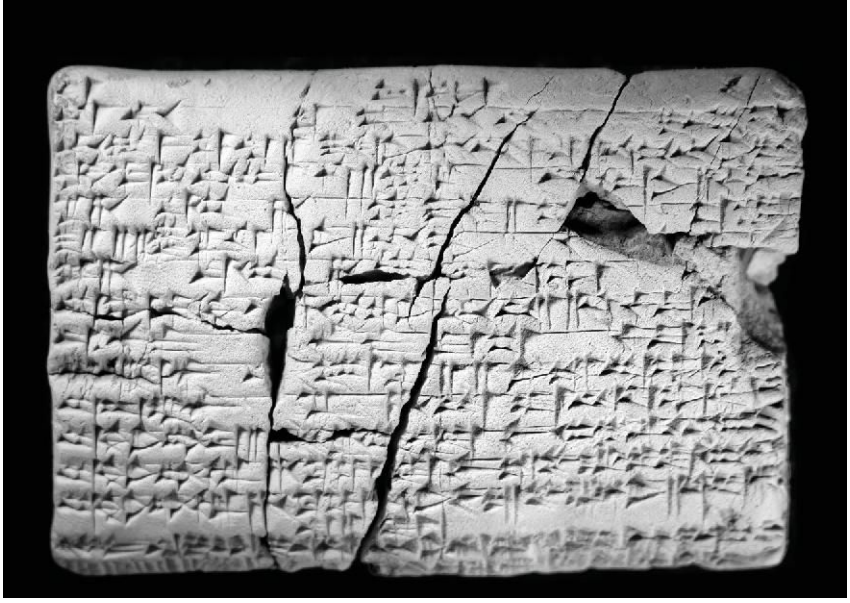
Tablets Reveal Amorite Language



COURTESY OF THE ROSEN SEMINAR

Tablet written in Amorite and Akkadian, currently in the Rosen Collection of Cornell University.

WHILE THE BIBLICAL WRITERS remembered them as a legendary people of Canaan who had descended from giants (see p. 52), the Amorites were a nomadic people from Syria, first attested in the third millennium BCE, who became one of the most powerful groups within Mesopotamia. Indeed, many of the famous Mesopotamian kings from this period, such as Hammurabi of Babylon and Zimri-Lim of Mari, were Amorites. But even as the Amorites expanded their power, the language of learning and administration remained Akkadian. This led some scholars to suggest that there was no distinct "Amorite" language but rather that it was simply a dialect of Akkadian.

Two newly published tablets have finally revealed the language of this mysterious ancient people.[1] The tablets—which are unprovenanced objects, likely illegally removed from Iraq more than three decades ago—contain lists, written in both Akkadian and Amorite, that functioned as short phrasebooks. The first tablet includes a list of deities and then moves on to constellations, food items, and types of clothing, while the second lists common bilingual phrases in Akkadian and Amorite. Both texts are written in cuneiform and have features that suggest they date to the Old Babylonian period (c. 1894–1595 BCE) and come from southern Mesopotamia. As the language and handwriting in the tablets are similar, they may even have been written by the same scribe.

The new tablets show that Amorite was actually a Northwest Semitic language, like Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Significantly, however, Amorite was not the same as Canaanite, as some of its features are much closer to other Semitic languages. This fluidity illustrates that in the third and second millennia BCE, the Canaanites, Amorites, and other Levantine peoples were all part of the same cultural and linguistic "stew."

[1] See Andrew George and Manfred Krebernik, "Two Remarkable Vocabularies: Amorite-Akkadian Bilinguals!" *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 116 (2022), pp. 113–166.

To learn more about the problems associated with objects that lack a secure archaeological context, visit **biblicalarchaeology.org/unprovenanced**.

Sling Bullet Uncovered at Yavneh

"VICTORY OF HERACLES AND Hauronas" reads the Greek inscription from a 2,200-year-old sling bullet. Contrary to what you might expect, however, the bullet was found not in Greece, but in Israel. The object was uncovered during the ongoing excavations at Tel Yavneh by the Israel Antiquities Authority and dates to a time when the town of Yavneh was a firm ally of the Seleucid Empire in the early years of the Hellenistic period (c. 332–37 BCE).

The inscription written on the sling bullet, which is made of lead and measures about 2 inches long, would have served to taunt the enemy, raise the slinger's morale, or possibly endow it with the favor of the gods Heracles and Hauronas whose names are inscribed upon it. During the second century BCE, Yavneh, located along Israel's southern coastal plain, was a fully Hellenized city. There is no way to know who used the sling bullet or against whom it may have been thrown. However, the excavation directors suggest that it may be connected to the Maccabean revolt against Greek rule, which is remembered in the celebration of Hanukkah.

INSET: DAFNA GAZIT, COURTESY ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

COURTESY KOBY HARATI, CITY OF DAVID

WHAT IS IT?

1. Bronze Napkin Holder
2. Gold Bead
3. Floral Pendant
4. Electrum Crown
5. Petrified Doughnut

ANSWER ON P. 27

Where Sumerians Know Your Name

MODERN PEOPLE are not the only ones who enjoy a nice drink after work or during a night out on the town. Indeed, 5,000 years ago, Sumerians in the ancient city of Lagash in southern Mesopotamia were doing exactly the same thing. While excavating the city, which is located about 200 miles southeast of Baghdad, archaeologists uncovered a public eating space dated to 2700 BCE, around the same time that the legendary Gilgamesh (see p. 64) would have ruled in nearby Uruk. The discovery sheds light on not only ancient food culture but also the understudied middle class of Mesopotamian society.

Uncovered only inches below the surface, the Mesopotamian tavern featured a partial kitchen, an oven, an ancient "refrigerator," and an open-air dining area filled with benches. The excavators also found around 150 serving dishes, some of which contained the remains of fish and animals served at the tavern, and evidence of beer, an important product in ancient Mesopotamia.

Although excavations in Iraq have historically focused on palaces, temples, and other monumental structures, the Lagash tavern represents the daily life of the middle class. Lagash was one of the oldest and largest cities in the Sumerian heartland of southern Mesopotamia during the third millennium BCE. Extending across nearly 2 square miles of marshland, the city was a major center of trade and production, with fertile agricultural land, plentiful fishing, and many other important resources.

COURTESY LAGASH ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

The moisture-wicking refrigerator from the Lagash tavern.

From Christianity to Islam in the Negev

EXCAVATIONS NEAR THE TOWN of Rahat in the Negev Desert shed new light on the transition from the Byzantine to Islamic periods in the southern Levant. The excavations, carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority, uncovered a luxurious estate and a small mosque (see below) that both date to the very beginning of the Islamic period in the seventh and eighth centuries. The team also uncovered a Byzantine farmstead that dates only a century earlier. These finds illustrate the rapid transition from Christianity to Islam in the northern Negev.

EMIL ALADJEM, COURTESY ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

Likely only able to hold a few dozen worshipers, the mosque is a simple, square-shaped structure with a half-circle niche (*mihrab*) in its wall facing Mecca. The mosque is interesting because of its early date and its rural location. This makes it one of the earliest known rural mosques discovered during an archaeological excavation. Its small size means that it likely served only the local inhabitants. It may have been funded by the owners of the estate to serve themselves and the local farming community.

The project began as a salvage excavation, spurred on by the planned construction of a new neighborhood in the predominantly Bedouin town of Rahat. The mosque and other finds are expected to be integrated into the new neighborhood, connecting the modern residents to their ancient past.

First Fragments
Biblical Papyrus from Roman Egypt

THROUGH SEPTEMBER 3, 2023
The Chester Beatty
Dublin, Ireland
chesterbeatty.ie

Titled *First Fragments: Biblical Papyrus from Roman Egypt*, the latest exhibition at the Chester Beatty museum in Dublin explores early Christian book and scribal culture through the lens of authors, scribes, bookbinders, translators, readers, and collectors.

In the center of the exhibit are the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, a group of 11 Greek papyrus codices that contain texts from both the Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew scriptures) and the Christian New Testament. Dating from the second to fourth centuries CE, these are among the earliest surviving Christian manuscripts that Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875–1968) acquired in the 1930s in Egypt. They are presented alongside several biblical fragments in Coptic and other objects illustrating early Christian book culture and scholarship.

This presentation of some 80 artifacts from Roman-era Egypt highlights issues of transmission and preservation of ancient texts, book construction and repair, and scribal practices, such as text formatting, corrections, glosses, and use of sacred names. Also on display is this parchment manuscript containing the monastic rules of Basil the Great. Written in Coptic and dating from the ninth or tenth century, the above leaf features an image of the church father himself.

The Bar'an Temple at Marib.

PETER FELIX SCHAEFER / PANTHER MEDIA GMBH / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Sheba on the Front Lines

MARIB, THE CAPITAL of the ancient South Arabian kingdom of Saba and home to the legendary Queen of Sheba, now finds itself on the front lines of one of today's most protracted and devastating conflicts, the Yemeni civil war. The roughly 60-acre site, which includes the towering remains of monumental pillared temples and one of the ancient world's largest dams, is just miles away from the modern city of Marib, an oil-rich provincial center that has emerged as a pivotal flash point in Yemen's nearly decade-old war between Houthi rebels and internationally backed government forces.

Inhabited since at least the mid-second millennium BCE, Marib rose to prominence in the early first millennium BCE as the capital of the Sabeans, a powerful and wealthy kingdom that controlled access to South Arabia's valuable incense trade—the likely reason for the Queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem in 1 Kings 10. Though poorly known to history (and archaeology), the Sabean capital features several unique and well-preserved religious complexes, including the seventh-century BCE Bar'an Temple (above) dedicated to the South Arabian god Almaqah and distinguished by its six giant, monolithic pillars (one broken) that guarded the grand peristyle entrance to its elevated podium and sanctuary. Marib was also renowned for its Great Dam—the remains of which still stand some 20 feet tall and extend several hundred feet—that channeled powerful seasonal flood waters onto expansive fields and gardens that made Marib a flourishing desert oasis for more than two millennia.

These towering emblems of the country's rich ancient heritage are increasingly under threat. The modern city, which now shelters many Yemenis who have been displaced by war, is a frequent target of Houthi rebels, with the city's expansive ancient ruins often in the line of fire, while a coalition airstrike in May 2015 partially destroyed one of the Great Dam's main sluice gates. Looting of Marib's archaeological sites is another concern, as desperation, hunger, and disease have led some to sell antiquities to help alleviate the ongoing humanitarian crisis wrought by the war.

Yemen's archaeologists, with support from the international community, are doing what they can to save the country's heritage before it is too late. The greatest attention is given to documenting and recording sites that are under imminent threat of wartime damage or destruction, while museum staffs are working tirelessly to document their collections so that local and international authorities can more easily identify artifacts that might eventually be damaged or looted.

In recognition of its incredible archaeology and historical and cultural significance, Marib was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in January 2023 but was simultaneously listed as "in danger" due to the threats it faces from the ongoing conflict.**—G.J.C.**

Moving the Needle

The Magnetic Revolution in Biblical Archaeology

Biblical archaeology increasingly benefits from sophisticated scientific methods that allow researchers to examine archaeological evidence that is largely invisible to the naked eye. Here we take a close look at two new methods that use magnetometry, the study of variations in the earth's geomagnetic field. The first method reveals ancient structures buried beneath the surface, and the other one dates artifacts that were heated to high temperatures at specific moments in time. Both methods have the potential to revolutionize our understanding of the biblical past.

Seeing into the Ground

ANDREW CREEKMORE

At the careful pace of modern archaeology, understanding the organization of ancient cities is a challenge. Even a decade of survey and excavation might not reveal more than a few buildings at any given site.

Over the past 40 years, improvements in computing power and the development of portable geophysics instruments fueled the expansion of nondestructive, remote sensing technology, such as ground-penetrating radar, magnetometry, and resistivity. These instruments have dramatically enhanced our ability to identify, map, and study buried architecture and archaeological features without having to fully excavate them. Today, these methods work hand in hand with traditional surveys and excavations to reveal aspects of city planning, layout, and destruction.

Tell es-Safi (biblical Gath)—a site between the southern coastal plain and the Judean foothills—has evidence for many different settlements, from the Early Bronze Age to the 20th century. Iron Age Gath was about 120 acres and included all the trappings of a Philistine city, such as fortification walls, houses, temples, and metal and olive oil production areas. I joined the team led by Aren Maeir of Bar-Ilan University in 2017 to conduct a magnetometer survey of the city.[1] This survey revealed buried architecture, straight streets, and burned areas that may date to the destruction of the city by King Hazael of Aram-Damascus in the late ninth century BCE.[2] What follows is a case study from Tell es-Safi showing how magnetometry works and demonstrating what advantages this marvelous method brings to the table.

Magnetometers measure the magnetism of soil, stone, and buried features located up to 6 feet below the surface. Two main factors make magnetometers especially useful for archaeology. First, soils, stones, and other materials are naturally subject to magnetization in which they develop a magnetic field induced by the earth's magnetic field. Archaeological features such as foundation trenches, storage pits, and mud walls have differing levels of magnetization. This creates contrasts that we can sense and map with magnetometers. Second, if soils, stones, or other materials are heated to a high temperature, they develop a higher magnetization. Thus, hearths, kilns, fired bricks, volcanic rocks (e.g., basalt), and burned structures represent highly magnetized features that can be sensed by magnetometers.

Magnetometry can survey large areas relatively quickly because the sensors are carried above the ground (see below photo), rather than dragged along the surface like ground-penetrating radar, and it can collect

PHOTO BY ANDREW CREEKMORE

University of Northern Colorado student Thomas Letchworth conducting a magnetometer survey at Tell es-Safi.

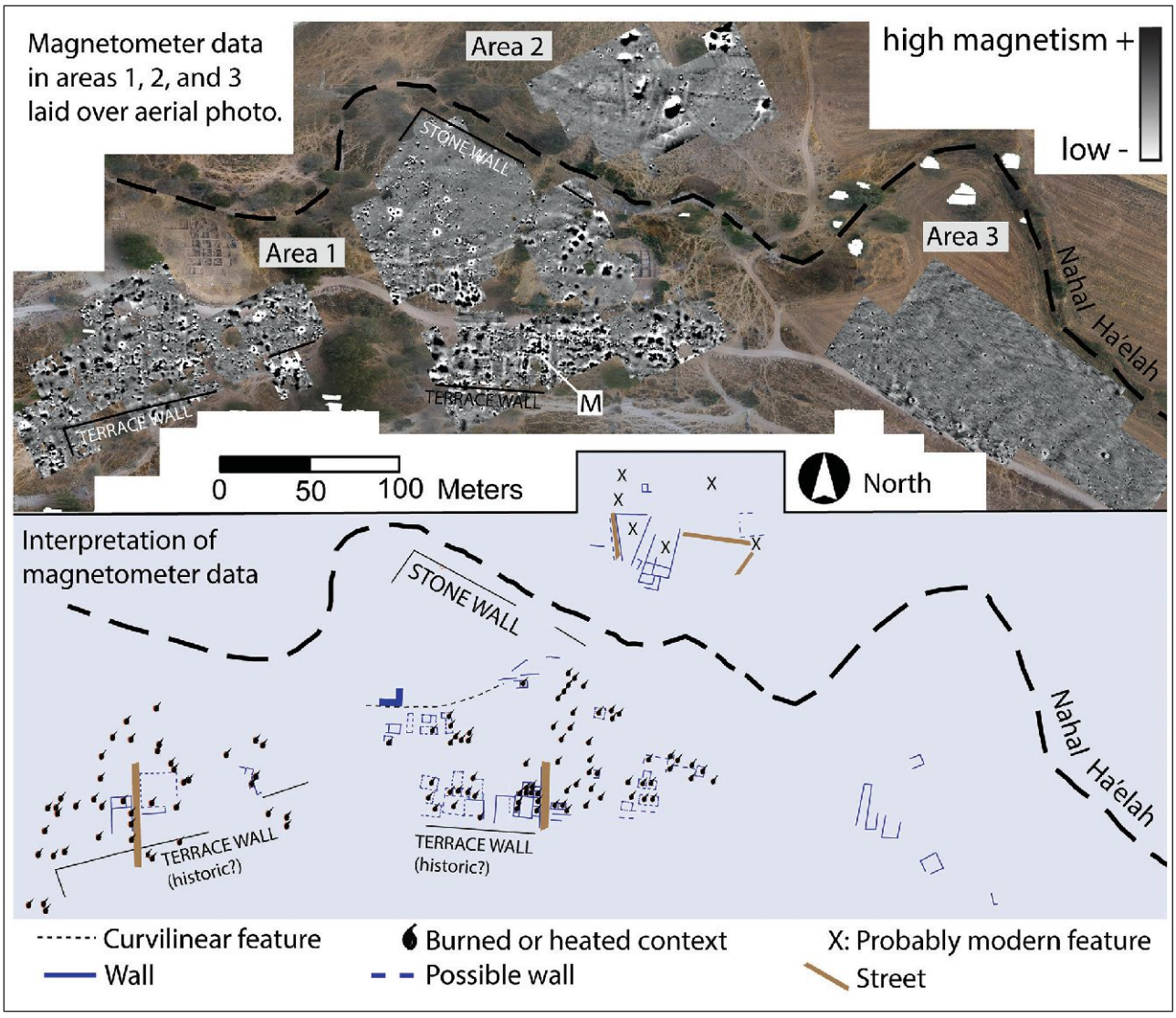


IMAGE BY ANDREW CREEKMORE

Magnetometry data and traced features from Tell es-Safi.

samples at a high rate. To conduct such a survey, technicians must first establish survey grids. Then they carry the magnetometer along rope guides, zig-zagging across the site to record measurements of magnetism at regular intervals.

At Tell es-Safi, the team surveyed five areas. The most productive areas were places in the lower city, where the magnetometer revealed dense architecture along the northern base of the chalk hill and two straight streets (see above). Structures were most apparent in the eastern area, where the data show many small to medium-sized rooms to the south and a line of burned features to the north. In the western area, only a few walls are visible. In both areas, the team identified many patches of high magnetism that suggest burning. These patches are present in the eastern and western areas, suggesting further dense settlement even in cases where the walls themselves are not visible.

Subsequent excavations revealed structures dating to the Iron Age IIA (c. 1000–925 BCE) and rooms full of burned and smashed pottery. These burned contexts are consistent with other evidence from prior excavations and can be linked to the destruction of the city by King Hazael in the ninth century.

The magnetometer effectively identified buried architecture and features and pointed excavators to potentially burned areas, which may be associated with industrial activities or conflict. Regardless of the cause of a fire, burned areas tend to preserve more artifacts that were abandoned in a hurry or even foodstuffs and other organic materials, which may be preserved if charred.

Although magnetometry may seem like magic, excavation and surface collections are still necessary to date buried features and confirm interpretations derived from magnetic data. Fortunately, excavations can be targeted to specific features identified in the magnetometry data. The striking results of the magnetometer survey at Tell es-Safi

lay the groundwork for future remote sensing surveys—and excavations—which will complement the current data and enhance our understanding of the urban structure of the city.

Dating Biblical Battles

NATHAN STEINMEYER

Since the beginnings of human interest in the past, a major question has been "How old is this?" Many different methods have been developed to determine the age of artifacts and buildings, from ceramic typologies to radiocarbon dating to dendrochronology (tree-ring dating). One of the most recent and groundbreaking tools in the archaeologist's tool kit is archaeomagnetic dating, which uses the strength and direction of the earth's magnetic field recorded within an object to pinpoint its precise date.

Objects such as pottery and mudbricks often contain "ferromagnetic" materials, matter that can form stable magnetic orientations. When heated to very high temperatures, such as in a pottery kiln or during a violent, fiery destruction, these materials rearrange themselves, like a compass, to align with the earth's magnetic field. As the object cools, it maintains this new alignment. Because the earth's magnetic field varies over time, the direction and intensity of the recorded magnetic field can be used to recreate that field at the moment the object was heated (as long as that object is found in the exact location where it was heated).

Whenever archaeologists are able to collect a sufficiently large number of samples from a region, they can reconstruct local variations in the earth's magnetic field over time. Once this variation is determined, archaeologists develop a sequence of chronologically fixed magnetic readings that allow newly excavated objects to be placed within the established timeline. The method is most useful when dating destruction layers, where a building or object was burned and then left in place for the archaeologist to find millennia later. It also allows archaeologists to compare destruction layers across sites, as it can accurately determine which destructions were concurrent and which happened at different times.

COURTESY YOAV VAKNIN

Yoav Vaknin marks mudbricks at Tel Batash.

In 2022, an international team of researchers was able to apply this new method to analyze 21 destruction layers at 17 different sites around Israel to firmly establish the absolute date of the destructions.[3] This, in turn, allowed the researchers to pin down dates for several destructive campaigns mentioned in the Bible, including those of Shishak (1 Kings 14:25), Hazael (2 Kings 12:17–18), Jehoash (2 Kings 14:11), Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 15:29), Sennacherib (2 Kings 18–19), and Nebuchadnezzar II (2 Kings 25). This is especially important as the time between some of these events was too short for methods like radiocarbon dating to differentiate between them with any degree of certainty. The archaeomagnetic method was so precise that researchers could differentiate the Babylonian campaigns of 600 and 586 BCE, showing that the Philistine city of Ekron was likely destroyed during the former and not the latter.

Beyond dating, archaeomagnetism can also be used to investigate site formation processes and to determine whether materials were burned or whether they were moved prior to being uncovered. It can also be used to analyze the temperatures at which objects were fired.

However, archaeologists face two major limitations in using this highly precise dating technique: First, analyzed objects must contain ferromagnetic materials. Second, they must be found in exactly the same spot as where they were originally heated. The latter condition disqualifies any object not meticulously recorded in the field, but also any finds that may have been moved in antiquity, such as dumped remains or reused construction materials.

While archaeomagnetism shows great promise, it is neither an instant solution to all dating problems, nor is it likely to render earlier dating methods obsolete. Indeed, it is only by using several methods in concert that archaeologists can continue to refine absolute dates of specific sites and events.

[1] This research was supported by the University of Northern Colorado, Bar-Ilan University, the U.S. National Science Foundation, the Israel Science Foundation, and the Minerva Stiftung.

[2] Andrew T. Creekmore III and Aren M. Maeir, "Philistine Urban Form at Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel: A Magnetometric Perspective," *Levant* 53.2 (2021), pp. 164–185.

[3] Yoav Vaknin et al., "Reconstructing Biblical Military Campaigns Using Geomagnetic Field Data," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119.44 (2022), e2209117119, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2209117119.

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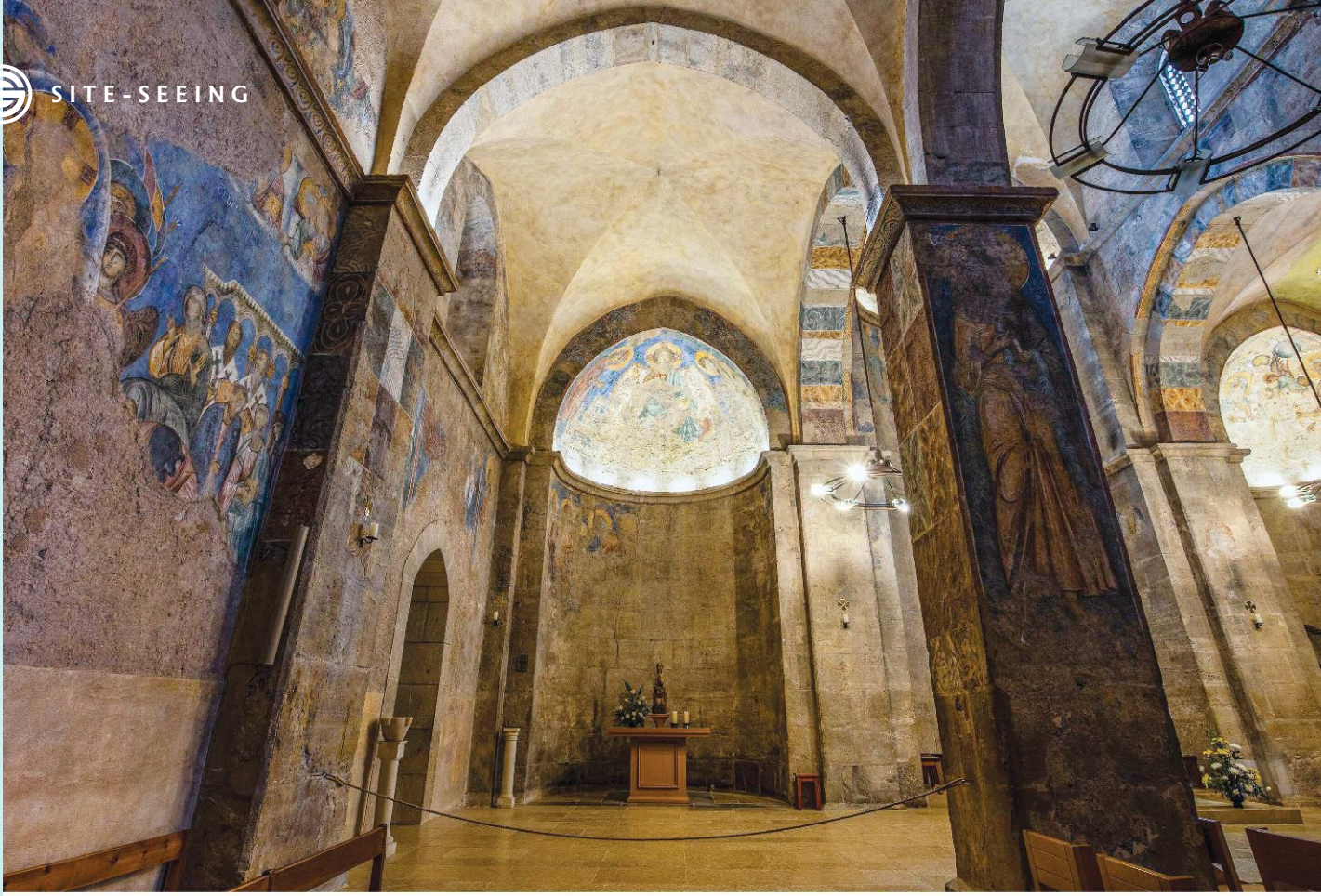

MOSHE EINHORN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Colorful Crusader Churches

JONATHAN KLAWANS

SEASONED VISITORS TO JERUSALEM surely know the Church of St. Anne, a pristinely preserved 12th-century Crusader church in the Romanesque style, near the beginning of the Via Dolorosa. Tradition associates the church's grotto with the birthplace of Jesus's mother, Mary, securing its importance for Christian pilgrims. Archaeology aficionados will value the ruins of the Pool of Bethesda, reflecting Jewish, Roman, and Byzantine history, which are located on the same compound as the church. Music enthusiasts will appreciate the structure's unequaled acoustics: If you stand in the center of the edifice and hum softly, the sound will carry toward the entryway.

Yet there is one thing the Church of St. Anne largely lacks: color. Some assume that the Crusaders who built the structure and worshiped in it were rather austere. But a better explanation relates to the building's later history. The Church of St. Anne owes its preservation to Jerusalem's medieval conqueror, Saladin, who transformed the building into a *madrasa*—an Islamic religious school. (The Arabic inscription over the entryway commemorates this.) The colorlessness of the current church likely results, more than anything else, from the aniconic sensitivity of its pious scholastic occupants.

Benedictine Monastery of the Resurrection
Location: Abu Ghosh, Israel

To get a sense for the Crusaders' taste for pictorial art, head out to the Benedictine Monastery of the Resurrection in the village of Abu Ghosh, just off the main highway barely 6 miles west of Jerusalem's edge. Here, too, one can visit a well-preserved 12th-century Crusader basilica—one Saladin's forces neither destroyed nor repurposed. At turns abandoned or used as a barn, the building fell into disrepair until France purchased it in 1899. Slight traces of the Byzantine-style frescoes remained visible, and these were brilliantly cleaned and restored by teams of experts from 1995 to 2001.

The frescoes are not merely colorful but fascinating. The central apse image depicts Jesus's legendary descent into hell—during the days between his death and resurrection.* Jesus's crucifixion is portrayed on the church's southern wall. Unfortunately, the central figure—Jesus—is poorly preserved,

*John Dominic Crossan and Sarah Sexton Crossan, "Resurrecting Easter: Hunting for the Original Resurrection Image," **BAR**, March/April 2019.

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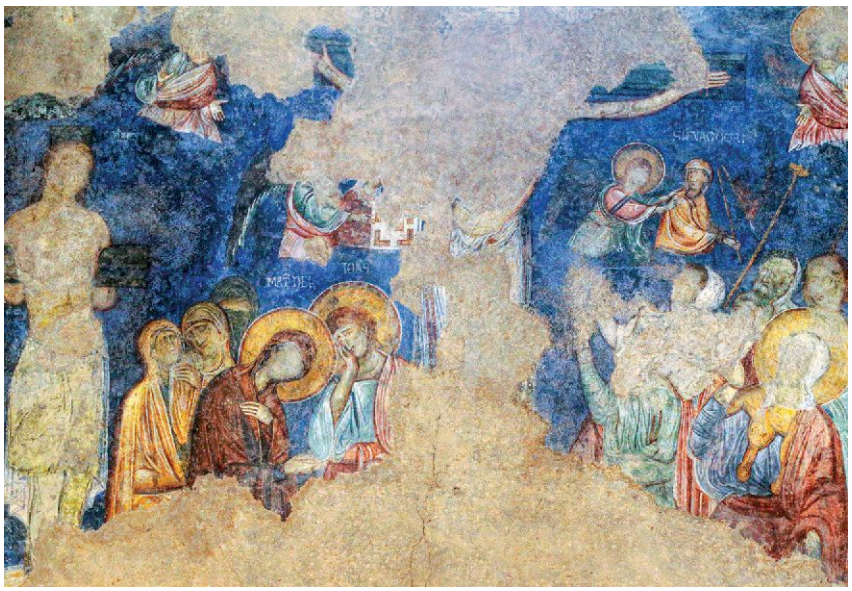
but his two hands are visible, flat against the crossbeam. Better preserved are the images of the two criminals crucified on either side of Jesus (Mark 15:27), each figure hanging on a cross barely wide enough to support his upper arms.

As you absorb the feel of the place, resist the temptation to test the acoustics. Worship services excepted, silence reigns in this basilica.

Stairs in the back of the structure lead down to the crypt, whose center is not a grave but a spring, dating back to Roman times. The Crusaders associated this location with the Emmaus of Luke 24:13–35, where the resurrected Jesus appears to two of his followers. The church's current authorities are less certain. Hedging the bet, they refer to the "Emmaus of the Crusaders."

Use of the site during the Roman period is in any event assured. As you exit the structure from the crypt, turn around and look to the left of the crypt's doorway, where you can see an inscription bearing the unmistakable marks of Rome's Tenth Legion, a detachment of which was stationed there. As you stand outside the church and appreciate its well-manicured gardens, you will also see the towering minaret of Abu Ghosh's historic mosque, named, curiously enough, for Uzair (aka Ezra; Quran 9:30).

Abu Ghosh can be reached by car, cab, or bus (line 185 departs near Jerusalem's central bus station). There is a small gift shop in the monastery and other travel services just outside. Abu Ghosh is well known for its Middle Eastern fare—its hummus above all—so you need not go hungry before catching a cab or a bus back to Jerusalem.



GODONG / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Fresco of the Crucifixion from the Benedictine Monastery of the Resurrection.

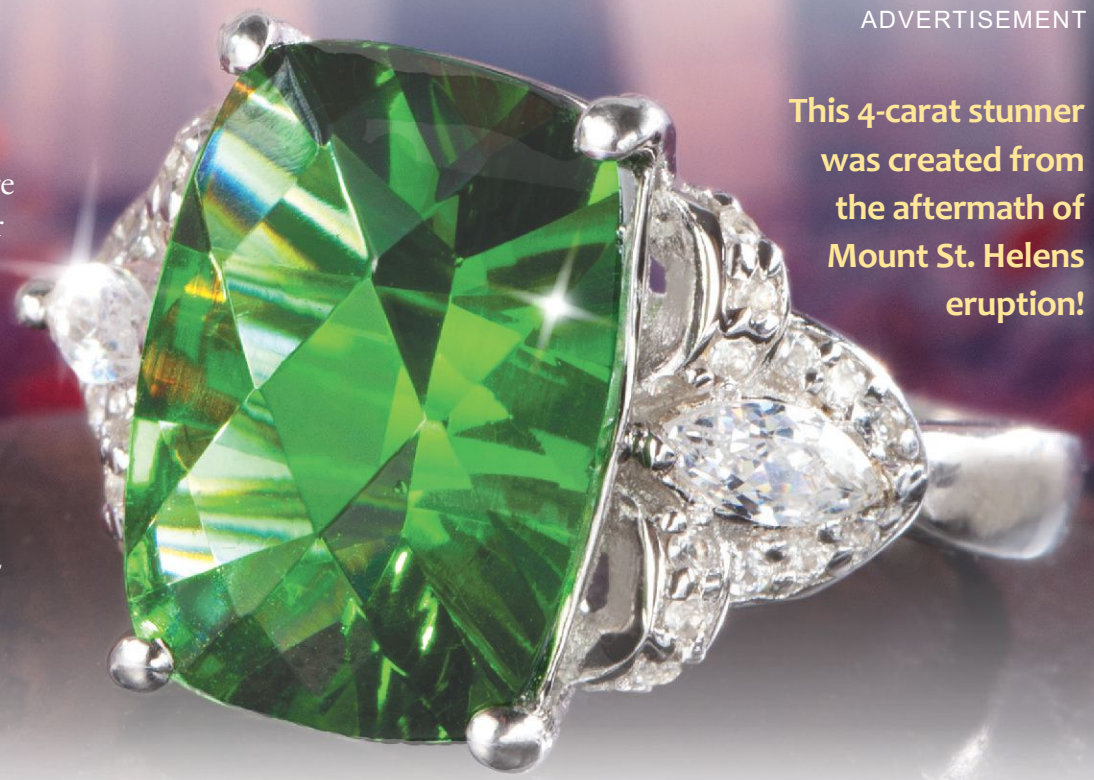
WHO DID IT? (SEE QUIZ ON P. 12)

Answer: Barbara Mertz (aka Elizabeth Peters and Barbara Michaels)

American author Barbara Mertz (1927–2013) studied Egyptology at the University of Chicago and graduated with a Ph.D. in 1952. Before becoming a fiction superstar, she published two nonfiction books on ancient Egypt: *Temples, Tombs, and Hieroglyphs: A Popular History of Ancient Egypt* (1964) and *Red Land, Black Land: Daily Life in Ancient Egypt* (1966). On the advice of her publisher, she wrote under pseudonyms to keep her fiction and nonfiction works separate. Under the name Elizabeth Peters, she wrote 39 novels, 20 of which starred the heroine Amelia Peabody and her archaeologist husband Dr. Radcliff Emerson. The pair solved various mysteries, while simultaneously doing exceptional archaeological work in Egypt during the Victorian era. Mertz's expertise in Egyptology shines through these novels, despite being works of fiction. She also wrote books starring art history professor Vicky Bliss and librarian Jacqueline Kirby. Under the pseudonym Barbara Michaels, she also wrote 29 suspense novels.

BARBARAMERTZ.ORG / PHOTO BY SHAUN N. CAMPBELL, 1991

Even as a famous novelist, Mertz made time for Egyptology. She remained a member of the Egypt Exploration Society, served on the editorial advisory board of *KMT*, and advocated against the trafficking of stolen antiquities. Perhaps her largest contribution to the field, though, was introducing many readers to ancient Egypt through her novels.



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Shifting Borders?

The Benyaw Inscription from Abel Beth Maacah

ROBERT A. MULLINS

FIVE FADED LETTERS inscribed on a storage jar is all the textual evidence we have from ninth-century BCE Abel Beth Maacah in the far north of Israel. However, this short and unassuming text may shed new light on ancient Israel's borders as we know them.[1]

The biblical site of Abel Beth Maacah (2 Samuel 20:14–22; 1 Kings 15:20; 2 Kings 15:29) is a prominent 25-acre mound in the northern part of the Hula Valley not far from the Israel-Lebanon border. Located at the crossroads of ancient Israel, Aram-Damascus, and Phoenicia, this region likely shifted its political allegiance many times, especially during the tenth and ninth centuries as these kingdoms were expanding and competing with one another.

A small village at the beginning of the Iron Age, Abel Beth Maacah expanded in the 11th century to become the largest city in the region. Even though the city had somewhat decreased in size during the tenth and ninth centuries, its intense urban character continued, as is attested by its massive architecture, which includes a possible citadel with casemate rooms, courtyards, and silos. Fascinating finds from this period include a faience figurine head of an elite bearded man and a hoard of several hundred astragali bones of sheep, goat, and deer found in an amphora near an earlier shrine.*

Archaeologists also found 35 storage jars, buried in the mudbrick debris of a storehouse that was destroyed in the late ninth or early eighth century BCE. Stacked neatly in rows on a beaten earth and plastered floor, their standardized shape, size, and manufacture point to a specialized mode of production that was probably centralized and controlled by a local authority. The jars, which stand nearly 2 feet high, have a capacity of about 11 gallons, and some were most likely used to store wine. Petrographic analysis indicates that they were made from clays typical of the northern Hula Valley and were therefore probably produced in a local workshop.

Significantly, one of the jars is inscribed. Written in black ink using the Old Hebrew script, the little inscription is slightly over 2 inches long, running around the middle of the jar's body, just below and to the left of the handle, which bears a deeply incised cross-shaped potter's mark. It consists of the prepositional *lamed* ("for" or "belonging to") followed by four letters that spell out the personal name *bnyw* (vocalized Benyaw), meaning "Yahweh has built."[2]

* Nava Panitz-Cohen and Naama Yahalom-Mack, "The Wise Woman of Abel Beth Maacah," **BAR**, July/August/September/October 2019.

PHOTO BY NAVA PANITZ-COHEN

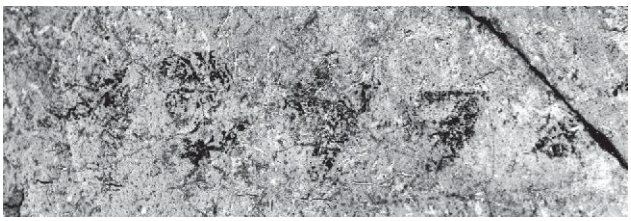


PHOTO BY TAL ROGOVSKI

DRAWING BY YULIA RUDMAN

A storage jar from Abel Beth Maacah featuring an Old Hebrew inscription "belonging to Benyaw" (middle image: infra-red photo, bottom: line drawing). The Yahwistic name Benyaw, which translates as "Yahweh has built," suggests the site was under Israelite control already by the ninth century BCE.

Although the verbal element *bn(h)* ("to build" or "create") is common in Semitic languages, what makes the name uniquely Israelite is the *-yaw* ending. This is a shortened form of the divine name Yahweh, the national deity of Israel and Judah. The *-yaw* was typically used in names from the Northern Kingdom of Israel; in Judah, the ending was *-yhw* and *-yh* (vocalized "yahu" and "yah," respectively). Furthermore, the script itself has diagnostic features that are clearly Old Hebrew rather than Phoenician, and it cannot be Aramaic, which only developed as an independent script in

the late eighth century. The Benyaw inscription can thus be safely assigned to the Old Hebrew language and script, fitting comfortably in the ninth or possibly early eighth century.

So who was Benyaw anyway? He certainly is not the famed Benaiah ben Yehoiada from the time of David and Solomon (2 Samuel 23:20; 1 Kings 2:25, 46). We assume he was a resident of the city. He may have been the owner and sender of the jar, its recipient, or even a tax collector. Or perhaps he was a local entrepreneur or a local agent who was commissioned by the state.

We also do not yet have concrete answers about the jar's contents, the building in which it was found—whether a private or state-run facility—or the identity of the kingdom in control of the site. Indeed, we have no compelling evidence as to whether Abel Beth Maacah was under Israelite, Phoenician, or Aramean control in the tenth and ninth centuries. But finding an Israelite name or any name honoring the Israelite national god this far north is a good indication that the city was under Israelite control or had close contacts with the Northern Kingdom. Continuing research will hopefully paint a better portrait of this individual, who would have never guessed that his name would become the focus of so much interest and debate nearly 3,000 years later!

[1] For full discussion, see Naama Yahalom-Mack et al., "The Iron Age IIA 'Benyaw Inscription' on a Jar from Tel Abel Beth Maacah," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (2021), pp. 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/00310328.2021.1975070.

[2] Reading courtesy of Christopher Rollston of the George Washington University.

WHAT IS IT? (SEE QUIZ ON P. 13)

Answer: 2 Gold Bead

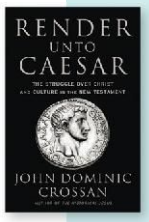
WHILE SIFTING MATERIAL from a Roman building in the City of David excavations in Jerusalem, a volunteer discovered a tiny gold bead. The bead, more than 1,600 years old, was created through a complex and delicate process, affixing 14 tiny golden balls together into a ring shape.

While beautiful and precious, the tiny gold bead is likely only a small part of a necklace or bracelet. This style of bead, which likely first appeared in Mesopotamia around 4,500 years ago, was uncommon due to the complex technique that it took to create such works of jewelry. A few other beads of this style have been discovered in excavations around Israel, but nearly all were made from silver instead of gold.

The bead came from a building, possibly a house, dated to the Roman period (c. 37 BCE–324 CE) and excavated in the City of David's Pilgrimage Road, a controversial underground tunnel that follows the ancient Roman road. The building sat on this ancient road and likely belonged to a wealthy family.

Render Unto Caesar

REVIEWED BY **ZEBA CROOK**



Render Unto Caesar
The Struggle Over Christ and Culture in the New Testament
By John Dominic Crossan
(New York: HarperOne, 2022), 290 pp., 3 figures, $28.99 (hardcover), $12.99 (ebook).

EVERY BOOK is a product of its time and place. This book's time and place? The fierce political, cultural, and theological polarization that characterizes contemporary America. The author, New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan, seeks to explore the precarious balance between secular culture and religion, using as his stepping off point Jesus's rebuke of Peter for his focus on human (rather than divine) concerns (Mark 8:33).

Commendably, Crossan does not fall into the common modern fallacy of equating Jesus's distinction between *ta tou Theou* ("the [things] of God") and *ta Kaisaros* ("the [things] of Caesar") with an anachronistic separation of church and state (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). Recognizing that such a separation is impossible, Crossan counsels the reader to understand the two Greek phrases very broadly, to include the cultural and political power (rule) of God and the cultural and political power (rule) of Caesar.

Crossan's work is more biblical theology than biblical scholarship, in that his main purpose is to address whether contemporary Christians can "live in a single world with both God *and* Caesar." He presents two well-known but problematic answers that the New Testament provides to this question (demonization and acculturation), and a preferable answer (confrontation) that is actually found outside of early Christian literature.

The first problematic approach is to demonize "the things of Caesar." This attitude is promoted in the Book of Revelation, which ardently imagines the cataclysmic, ruthless, and vengeful slaughter of its opponents. The writer of Revelation warns that Rome is so dangerous, so evil, and so untrustworthy that embracing Roman culture is unimaginable. Because Rome is utterly doomed to God's eventual wrath, wholesale rejection of Rome is the only feasible option.

The second problematic approach appears in the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, which Crossan argues must be read as an integrated single work. Luke-Acts promotes a wholesale acculturation to Rome: Rome is the future, the way forward for Christianity. The result is an inevitable but also fruitful Romanized Christianity.

Both approaches are problematic for different reasons: demonization because it is unhistorical (God did not slaughter the Romans, as promised) and acculturation because it made Christians turn away from justice to fit into the Roman imperial order. Demonization and acculturation are mutually exclusive and wholly contradictory. The way out for contemporary Christians can be found in a third option, which Crossan provocatively finds outside of the New Testament.

Crossan's work is more biblical theology than biblical scholarship. His main purpose is to address whether Christians can "live in a single world with both God and Caesar."

The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus situates Jesus in a trajectory of messianic criticism of Rome, one that involves nonviolent resistance. In Crossan's opinion, nonviolent resistance does not demonize, because it promotes a view of God as more interested in redistributive justice and forgiveness than bloodthirsty vengeance. Neither, obviously, does nonviolent resistance canonize or wholly embrace acculturation. Rather, it resists, criticizes, and holds at arm's length. It is motivated more by the desire for justice than for either victory or peaceful coexistence.

In today's America, Christians argue endlessly and sometimes brutally with each other over how the Bible is best deployed as the solution to all the country's perceived problems. Various sides can cite the Bible to defend their positions on political, economic, and cultural policy; each side represents itself as the more authentically Christian. However, in the end I wonder: Is the root of the problem really deciding whose view of the Bible is more (or less) valid, responsible, or scholarly? Or is the real problem perhaps the very act of trying to use an ancient and culturally distant text to address modern issues in the first place?

The irony is that though Crossan promotes an approach to cultural engagement that critically resists acculturation (like Josephus's Jesus), this book actually represents wholesale acculturation to the American culture wars. Like the Maccabees, who raged against acculturation to Hellenism despite using Greek language, rhetoric, and logic to do so, Crossan shows himself to be wholly acculturated when he accepts the rules of engagement in contemporary debates over the Bible's place in American society. Critical resistance to this culture would perhaps mean not merely reading and interpreting the Bible differently, as Crossan has done, but rather showing why the Bible should not be used to shape modern social, political, and economic policy.

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Madain Saleh

The site of Madain Saleh, located in northwestern Saudi Arabia, preserves the remains of the ancient city of Hegra. The city flourished during the first century CE as an important stop on the Nabatean-controlled incense route that connected South Arabia and the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and Roman worlds. At the height of Nabatean power, Hegra held nearly the same political and economic significance as Petra, the kingdom's capital, located 300 miles to the north in modern-day Jordan.

Like Petra, Madain Saleh is remarkable for its awe-inspiring rock-cut architecture. Pictured here is Qasr al-Farid (Arabic for "Lonely Castle"), which is the largest of the site's more than 100 rock-cut tombs. Carved into an isolated sandstone outcrop, Qasr al-Farid stands roughly four stories tall but was actually never completed. A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008, Madain Saleh is one of Saudi Arabia's leading tourist destinations.

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The Rise of the

THE YEAR IS 150 BCE. For all who live in the southern Levant, life is calm and prosperous. Along the coast are busy ports whose harbors welcome ships carrying imported wine, exotic foodstuffs, and fancy tablewares. People's homes boast luxurious interior décor: brightly painted walls, mosaic floors, stone furniture, etc. Commercial exchange, imported goods, comfortable lifestyles—all by-products of a connected, cosmopolitan world.

That world is overseen by two great powers. To the south, in Egypt, are the Ptolemies, dynasts of a royal house founded by one of the generals of Alexander the Great. To the north are the Seleucids, a dynasty founded by another of Alexander's generals. At this moment the Seleucids are in charge. Their capital at Antioch (modern day Antakya in southern Turkey) is distant, but their authority is omnipresent, thanks to the movements

Maccabees

ANDREA M. BERLIN

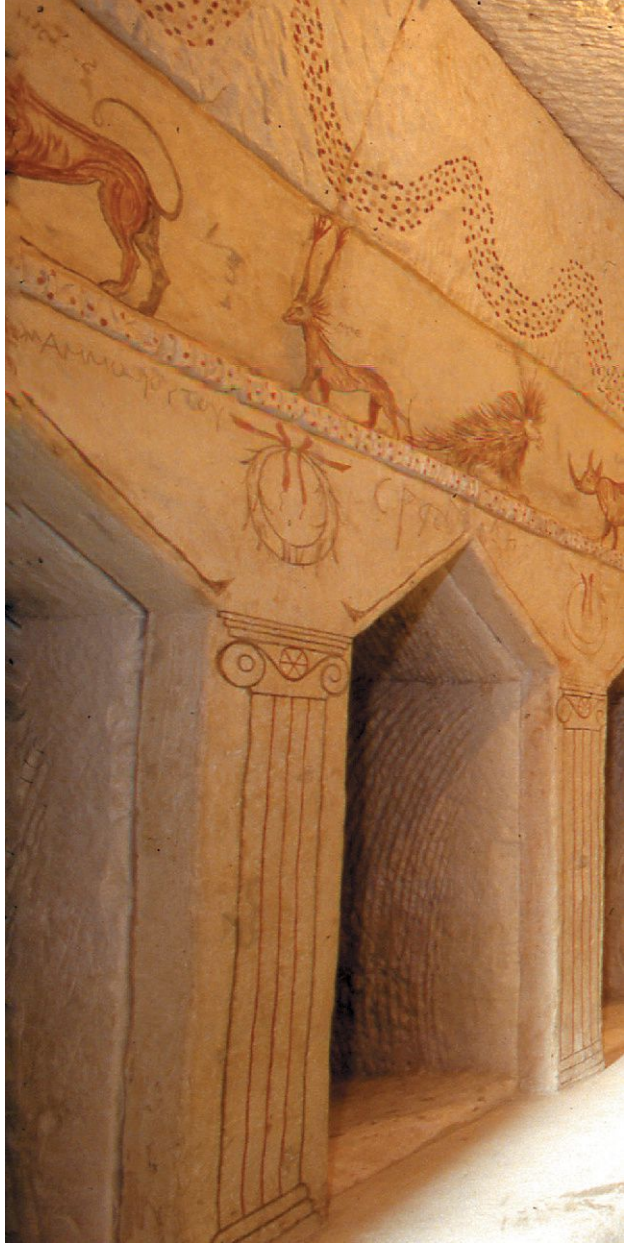
of imperial officials, the assertive presence of stone inscriptions, and the regular use of silver coins that carry the king's face into the hands and homes of individuals throughout the land.

Fast-forward 40 years to 110 BCE. The center of this crowded, polyglot, multicultural world has become a singular polity: the Hasmonean kingdom. That kingdom includes the coastal plain from Ashdod to Joppa, east through the Shephelah (Judean foothills) to the Jordan River, and north to the lower Galilee. Within the kingdom, Mediterranean goods have disappeared along with the lifestyles they adorned.

The Hasmonean success story is neatly summarized in several ancient historical accounts: 1 Maccabees, the Hasmonean's own court history; 2 Maccabees, a précis of a longer work by the otherwise unknown Jason of

COURTESY OF THE TEL KEDESH EXCAVATIONS / SHARON HERBERT & ANDREA BERLIN, DIRECTORS

PREVIOUS PAGES: Kedesh, a site in northern Israel, illuminates the history of the entire region during the Hellenistic period (fourth-first centuries BCE). About 20 miles east of Tyre, Kedesh was a Phoenician settlement, but its location—at the eastern edge of that coastal city's rural hinterland—meant that its closest neighbors were Judean. It fell under Ptolemaic control in the third century and then Seleucid control in 197 BCE. It served as a valuable imperial investment: a busy administrative center, an active economic hub, and a place to entertain envoys. After some 50 years, it was abruptly abandoned, and it stayed that way for two decades. Later, in the first century BCE, the region was resettled by Judeans and became part of the Hasmonean kingdom.



Cyrene; and the extended narrative of the first-century CE Jewish historian Josephus. These works are invaluable—and also biased. Understanding what happened from the texts alone is akin to viewing the past through a pair of glasses with a single lens. We need a second, companion lens to bring the view into focus.

In the case of the Hasmonean rise to power, archaeology provides that second lens. A wealth of new and newly understood remains shows us what was happening on the ground during the precise 40 years in which the Hasmoneans made their move onto the world stage. Taken together and set in context, they reveal the circumstances in which a kingdom came into being.[1]

As recounted by ancient authors, the Hasmonean rise began in 167 BCE, the eighth year of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV. It was, initially, an internal affair: a conflict between Judean insiders, who played the game of imperial accommodators, and pious outsiders, who wanted no part of the Seleucid regime and its

Greek-inflected lifestyle. The trouble began when Antiochus IV, returning from a failed invasion of Egypt, raided the Jerusalem Temple, attacked the city, and built a citadel, called the Akra, in the City of David, a place where "sinful ... lawless men" lived (1 Maccabees 1:34).

Next came an edict to offer swine to pagan deities, forgo Jewish laws, and cease Temple sacrifices. When an imperial official came to the town of Modi'in to enforce this new edict, a priest named Mattathias confronted and killed him, then took to the hills with a group of supporters and his five sons, including Judah who became his successor. Antiochus sent generals and forces, but Judah and his men defeated them and soon reclaimed and re-dedicated the Temple. Judah's success enraged those who lived around Judea, requiring a series of battles against "the nations all around" (1 Maccabees 5:38).

In 160 BCE, Judah died and was succeeded by

ABOVE: GARO NALBANDIAN
LEFT: PHOTO BY MARK LEE TENEY, COURTESY OF IAN STERN, DIRECTOR

MAGNIFICENT MARESHA. During the Hellenistic period, some cities flourished. Maresha was one of them. Located between Jerusalem in the Judean hills and Gaza on the Mediterranean coast, Maresha served as a commercial center for the Ptolemies in the third century BCE and an administrative center for the Seleucids in the second century. Its inhabitants enjoyed many luxuries, including fine pottery (see kraters, at right), and buried their dead in decorated tombs. Carved from soft limestone and painted with animals and mythological creatures, the pictured cave-tomb (see above) contained a central burial chamber flanked by numerous burial niches. Eventually, the Maccabees captured the city, forced Jewish conversion on its inhabitants, and incorporated it into their kingdom.

his brother Jonathan, who continued to pursue the cause, alternatively fighting and negotiating with successive Seleucid kings and generals and mounting attacks against "the lawless … and leaders of evil" (1 Maccabees 9:58, 61). Upon Jonathan's death in 142 BCE, his brother Simon took over and in that same year captured the Akra in Jerusalem (see sidebar, p. 37). The author of 1 Maccabees writes, "The yoke of the nations was lifted from Israel, and the people began to write on their documents and transactions, 'In the first year of Simon the great high priest, both

INSET: © AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

SELEUCID "EAGLES." Around 150 BCE, new coins began to appear in Seleucid territory. The so-called Seleucid "eagles" pictured Alexander Balas, a contender for the Seleucid throne, on one side and an eagle on the other. This silver coin—dating to 150–149 BCE, minted in Tyre, and measuring about 1 inch in diameter—shows a diademed Alexander Balas and an eagle on a thunderbolt, along with Alexander's name and title (king) in Greek. Ptolemy VI, who hoped to gain control of the entire region, supported Alexander Balas's claim and flooded the market with these coins.

general and leader of the Judeans.'" (13:41–42). In other words, in 142 BCE, from angles both military and administrative, the Hasmonean kingdom was born.

From archaeology, we know that the 160s BCE was a time of broad prosperity, robust international contacts, and comfortable cosmopolitan lifestyles. This is the middle of what we call the Hellenistic period, an era well known by archaeologists as a time of great material wealth. We find busy port cities, such as Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Dor, thriving inland cities, like Maresha, Samaria, and Beth Shean-Scythopolis, and in between a dense lattice of villages, estates, farms, and inns. Each locale was both a destination market and a link that facilitated the flow of crafts and agricultural products. In the north, the great commercial ports of Akko-Ptolemais and Tyre had robust coin mints, a reflection of their stature in the imperial power grid. The rural interior served as an agricultural supplier, with Akko-Ptolemais reliant on the Lower Galilee and the Jezreel Valley and Tyre dependent on the Upper Galilee and Hula Valley.

We now know that this crowded, prosperous, connected world was abruptly upended in the late 140s BCE—but not on account of the Hasmoneans. Across the entire Galilee and coastal plain, we see a wave of destruction and abandonment. Almost everywhere, people abandoned well-appointed, well-situated homes, leaving behind good agricultural land, storerooms and installations, and the comfortable lives these supported. What happened?

The precipitating event that set things in motion was Antiochus IV's failed invasion of Egypt in 168 BCE. His defeat allowed the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy VI, a wily, ambitious, savvy man, to revive a keen and constant ambition: retake the southern Levant, a region that earlier Egyptian rulers regarded as their birthright.

From 1 Maccabees, we know what happens next: Antiochus IV raids the Jerusalem Temple and inspires a militarized Judean response (1:20–24). Archaeological evidence—in this case a long-known but mysterious coin series—reveals the larger context. The series begins to show up in Judea in the late 160s BCE. The numismatist Julien Olivier has argued that these were Ptolemaic issues, struck by Ptolemy VI to help fund the Maccabees,[2] whose local uprising provided Ptolemy VI with a golden opportunity to foment destabilization deep inside Seleucid territory.

Ten years later, in 150 BCE, a new round of Ptolemaic-style coins appeared in Seleucid territory—the so-called Seleucid "eagles." These too were designed to support Ptolemy VI's plan of regional conquest. The ruler named on these coins was Alexander Balas, a purported heir to the Seleucid throne whom Ptolemy had co-opted and even married to his daughter, Cleopatra Thea. Ptolemy settled Balas and Cleopatra in Akko-Ptolemais, and it was that city's mint that struck the new issues.

From 150 to 145 BCE, the minting of these Seleucid "eagles" intensified. We know this thanks to close study of the dies used to strike them, and the recognition that the number of dies spiked, from just one or two dies initially to six different dies in 147 BCE. Why so many coins? To pay soldiers, build up garrisons, and prepare for war. Indeed, in 147/6 BCE, Ptolemy VI made his move, marching up the Levantine coast, where city after city fell into his hands. By the summer of 145 BCE, he had

made a triumphant entrance into the Seleucid capital of Antioch and been crowned monarch of its realms. In the rendering of 1 Maccabees, he "wore two diadems … one for Egypt and one for Asia" (11:13).

Almost at once, however, it all came apart. A Seleucid prince arose to challenge Ptolemy, and their armies faced off in battle just northeast of Antioch. The king suffered a severe head wound and died three days later.

For a generation, Ptolemy VI had been the chief mastermind and manipulator of Levantine politics. His death in the Seleucid capital left an imperial throne empty and open to contention. A vicious fight immediately broke out. The contenders were Demetrius II and Diodotus

The Maccabees Take Jerusalem

ANDREA M. BERLIN

In 1 Maccabees, Jerusalem is the epicenter of the Hasmonean rise to power. This makes sense for many reasons, but the main one is that by the time the book was written around 110 BCE, the Hasmonean kingdom was a reality with Jerusalem as its capital. The backstory of how this came to be was, naturally, fundamental to the author's narrative. In that backstory, Simon's conquest of the Seleucid citadel known as the Akra is the pivot, the launchpad for everything that comes next.

Recent discoveries in the City of David align with key aspects of the textual account. At the top of the western slope of the ridge, overlooking the Central (Tyropean) Valley, excavators found a massive wall and tower (see below), a structure with an evident military function, datable to the late 160s BCE. The excavations showed that this structure was partially demolished in the late 140s. Following shortly upon this demolition, the tower was refortified by a huge defensive glacis, which affirmed the continued necessity of military architecture. These discoveries mesh with the text, offering illustrations of the initial construction of the Akra by the Seleucids along with Simon's conquest and his (or his successor's) rebuilding.

Yet while archaeology affirms the details of what happened in Jerusalem, it also shows us something else: Jerusalem was a small part of a much larger story. The city lay at the edge of a large stage, a bit player in a big power drama. The real stars were the Ptolemies and Seleucids; their actions drove the plot. The Hasmoneans were minor characters until the last act.

The glacis, tower, and massive wall of the Akra citadel.

PHOTO ASAF PERETZ, COURTESY OF THE ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

WAVE OF DESTRUCTION. In the 140s BCE, numerous cities, towns, and even farms throughout Galilee were abandoned or destroyed in the wake of fighting between Seleucid factions. At the site of Khirbet el-Eika in Lower Galilee, archaeologists found evidence of this destruction in the form of broken wine jars (above) that date to c. 143 BCE. Many sites lay abandoned for decades until they were eventually resettled by the Hasmoneans.

Tryphon, a former general of Alexander Balas.

Once again, coins show us what was happening on the ground. The mints of Seleucia Pieria (Antioch's port city), Sidon, and Tyre coined for Demetrius II, while those of Byblos, Akko-Ptolemais, Dor, and Ashkelon coined for Tryphon. They battled until the year 141 BCE, when Demetrius II decided to take his army east, hoping to retake Babylonia and use its resources for his Levantine struggle. His plan collapsed when he was captured by the Parthians, who held him prisoner for almost a decade. In 138, his brother Antiochus VII resumed the battle for the Levant, besieging and then defeating Tryphon at Dor.

With Antiochus's victory, the frenzy surrounding the Seleucid succession settled down. Seleucid authority returned, somewhat truncated but still palpable, until the year 129 BCE, when Antiochus mounted a campaign on his Parthian frontier—and was killed. Only then was the historical stage emptied of its power players. Only then was there room for something new.

These events are the historical context that explain the archaeological remains we see on the ground: the sudden wave of abandoned and destroyed sites across so much of the region. In the densely populated backyards of the coastal cities, towns and villages were vacated, key outposts destroyed or abandoned. The epicenter of the chaos appears to have been the Galilee, where more than a dozen sites of various size were destroyed or abandoned. Here the warring Seleucid factions maneuvered to destroy agricultural stores and disable administrative centers and supply networks.

At the same time, settlements in the central coastal plain were simply abandoned: a rural estate at Ramat Aviv, a cluster of farmsteads surrounding Tel Hashash, a manor house with storerooms at Elad, over a dozen agricultural compounds in the Plain of Sharon, etc. The same scenario played out in the thickly settled southern coastal plain, where more than 100 villages, estates, and farmsteads, with workshops producing wine, oil, pottery, purple dye, and textiles, were methodically and completely vacated.

The particular geography and chronology reveal the fallout from the fierce battle between

Demetrius and Tryphon for control of the southern Levant. This explanation also makes sense of another aspect of the archaeological evidence, which is that some zones remained completely unaffected. The abandonments and destructions do not extend into the Jordan Valley, central hills, or foothills; in these regions, the inland "anchor" cities—Beth Shean-Scythopolis, Samaria, and Maresha—continued, undisturbed and thriving. Nonetheless, the archaeological evidence of ferocity and flight is stunning. It reveals a picture heretofore unknown yet somehow familiar: the heartbreaking human cost of a struggle for political power and control.

And what of the Hasmoneans? What do the archaeological remains tell us about their rise?

The brutal events of the late 140s left broad regions with abandoned settlements and broken networks. It is exactly inside this moment that Simon retakes the Akra in Jerusalem—an event that, considering how factionalized and otherwise occupied the competing Seleucid forces were, may now be seen as more opportunistic than organized. Yet, although much of the territory throughout this region now lay vacated, neither Simon nor his son and successor John Hyrcanus moved into it. In fact, the final act revealed by archaeology is that it took some 20 years—almost a full generation—before we see a Hasmonean kingdom that extended beyond the immediate environs of Judea itself.

The first region to be resettled was the Lower Galilee, where the appearance of small Seleucid bronze coins dating to the 130s BCE and issued by the Jerusalem mint, indicate Judean movement northward. By the end of the century, we find two Hasmonean footholds in the Upper Galilee: a resettlement at Khirbet esh-Shuhara and a new settlement at Qeren Naftali, overlooking the Hula Valley. Also in the 120s, we find new settlement in the western portions of Judea, at ten new villages and farmsteads north of the Elah Valley. In the Plain of Sharon, the estate at Elad was reinhabited, along with other settlements in this area. In every place where sites were resettled, it happened without contest, as all had been abandoned.

The Hasmoneans were not alone in taking advantage of the sudden power vacuum created by the Seleucid self-implosion. In the late second century BCE, almost every major Levantine coastal city from Cilicia south achieved political autonomy, including Tyre, Sidon, Akko-Ptolemais, Gaza, and Ashkelon. Farther inland, ancient city-states reemerged: Amman, where Zeno Cotylas founded a short-lived dynasty, and Damascus, which was refounded with the name Demetrias by the Seleucid scion Demetrius III to serve as a new capital. New polities formed or expanded, including the Itureans in the Beqa Valley and the Nabateans in what had been Edom in southern Transjordan. By the mid-first century BCE, 16 major cities of the southern Levant had become independent polities.

Archaeology reveals how great power politics created the circumstances in which the Hasmonean kingdom could be imagined—and also the 40-year-long stretch of time that it took to come into being. The author of 1 Maccabees narrates an arc marked by strength, strategy, and guile, one almost preordained. Outside circumstances barely figure; in their stead, personal qualities shine forth: charisma, strength of character, strategic vision, and bravery. No doubt these existed and mattered. In the end, after all, it is people who make history. But they do not make the worlds and systems into which they are born—and within which they find their roles, opportunities, and fates. To reimagine those, we need help from other sources. A good place to start is archaeology.

[1] This article is based on recent research on the Maccabean rise presented in Andrea M. Berlin and Paul J. Kosmin, eds., *The Middle Maccabees: Archaeology, History, and the Rise of the Hasmonean Kingdom* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021).

[2] See Julien Olivier, "Coinage as a Tool of Ptolemy VI Philometer's Policies: Ptolemaic Coins in Coele Syria and Phoenicia in the Middle of the Second Century BCE," *Israel Numismatic Review* 13 (2018), pp. 35–54.

COURTESY OF UZI LEIBNER

David and Solomon's INVISIBLE Kingdom

ZACHARY THOMAS AND
EREZ BEN-YOSEF

PIXINOO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

FOR SOME, ARCHAEOLOGY PROVES that David and Solomon ruled over a powerful kingdom made up of walled, well-fortified cities and towns, places like Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, and more recently, Khirbet Qeiyafa. For others, the same archaeology shows that their kingdom wasn't much of a kingdom at all—and certainly nothing like the great power described in the Bible.

We contend, however, that archaeology, at least as traditionally practiced, will likely never be able to identify David and Solomon's kingdom. Why? Because it was largely invisible.[1]

What do we mean? It is very possible that David and Solomon did rule over a powerful kingdom, but it was made up of not only city dwellers and townspeople but also pastoral nomads, a population whose nomadic way of life—living in tents and herding animals as they move from place to place—leaves few, if any, archaeological traces. Their temporary campsites are difficult to identify and date, and in most of the southern Levant, such remains have been erased by later agricultural activities and environmental forces. Even when such ephemeral remains are found, as is sometimes the case in arid regions of southern Israel and Jordan, the finds are typically so poor that, except for indicating the presence of such groups, we gain little insight into their cultural identity or political connections.

Our claim represents a substantial challenge for biblical archaeology, which has long suffered from an "architectural bias."* In prioritizing the excavation of ancient cities and towns, archaeologists have assumed that ancient Israel's population was primarily urban or settled and that only settled societies form complex political structures like states and kingdoms. Both of these assumptions must now be rethought.

Most scholars agree that the Israelites first emerged from the pastoral-nomadic populations of the southern Levant during the Late Bronze Age (c. 1550–1200 BCE).** The subsequent Iron Age I (c. 1200–1000 BCE) is often

* See Erez Ben-Yosef, Archaeological Views: "Biblical Archaeology's Architectural Bias," **BAR**, November/December 2019.

** See Anson Rainey, "Inside, Outside: Where Did the Early Israelites Come From?" **BAR**, November/December 2008.

NOMADIC LIVING. Nomadic structures, such as these tents from Merzouga, Morocco, are easy to move. This is an essential feature for past and present nomads, as they travel from place to place to herd their animals. However, tents and other nomadic structures do not often preserve well in the archaeological record, thereby making identification and reconstruction of ancient nomadic peoples difficult. The Bible recounts that Kings David and Solomon ruled over the 12 tribes of Israel, but, despite years of searching, archaeological evidence of their kingdom remains limited. Yet, if their kingdom comprised mostly pastoral nomads, along with some city dwellers and townspeople, it makes better sense of the archaeological findings.

imagined as a time when the Israelite tribes began to settle down in small highland villages, as attested by scores of small sites that appear in the central hill country at this time. By the time of David and Solomon in the tenth century, larger fortified cities had appeared, at sites like Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer, which were thought by many to evidence the formation of a united kingdom that had extended its power both north and south across the land. More recently, however, the date of many of these sites has been challenged, with some scholars arguing they were only fortified in the ninth century BCE, during the time of Kings Omri and Ahab of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.*

Even if some fortified cities and towns were built and settled, however, they tell only part of the story. It is likely that many Israelites remained pastoral nomads and continued this way of life through the tenth century. For one thing, the Hebrew Bible references tent-dwelling Israelites well into the period of the Divided Monarchy, with some groups, like the nomadic and wine-avoiding Rechabites (Jeremiah 35), remaining in tents through the time of the Babylonian conquest in 586 BCE.

Archaeologically, the problem is that it is very difficult to find the remains of nomads in the main areas of David and Solomon's rule—the central highlands, the Shephelah (the foothills between the highlands and

* For various views, see Hershel Shanks, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," **BAR**, July/August 1997; William Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," **BAR**, March/April 2000; Hershel Shanks, "A 'Centrist' at the Center of Controversy: **BAR** Interviews Israel Finkelstein," **BAR**, November/December 2002; Yosef Garfinkel, "The Birth & Death of Biblical Minimalism," **BAR**, May/June 2011.

coastal plain), and the northern valleys. These regions have been affected by millennia of almost continuous settlement, farming, and environmental disruptions. As a result, the archaeological remains of these nomadic Israelites are largely invisible, as are any indications of the role they may have played in the kingdom's society, economy, and political structure.

We do have one important archaeological clue, however, that during the time of the United Monarchy a large portion of Israel's population was still nomadic. Between the tenth and early eighth centuries, the Southern Kingdom of Judah witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of settled sites; suddenly a very large number of people become archaeologically visible. This dramatic increase is best explained by the "settling down" of a large and previously nomadic population. Otherwise, archaeology tells us little about the nomads who made up the bulk of ancient Israel's population.

Fortunately, the Hebrew Bible provides several direct and indirect references to these pastoral-nomadic groups. Perhaps the most famous is found in 1 Kings 12:16, when the northern tribes rebel against Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor, and shout out, "To your tents, O Israel!" While some scholars understand "tents" to be a symbolic anachronism referencing Israel's earliest history, it is much more likely that most Israelites still lived in tents during the time of Rehoboam.

We find another clear example in 1 Kings 4, which lists the officials whom Solomon posted in different parts of his kingdom to collect taxes. One of these officials was located on the east side of the Jordan River at or near a place called Mahanaim (Hebrew for "two camps"). There is no obvious reason for locating an official here until we consider that Mahanaim lies on a route known as the Way of the Tent Dwellers (Judges 8:11). This route was used by pastoral nomads

RNDMS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

TODD BOLEN / BIBLEPLACES.COM

CITY LIVING. Stone preserves better than fabric. Archaeologists have uncovered some Iron Age monumental structures, including remains of six-chambered gates at Hazor, Megiddo (below), and Gezer. These "Solomonic" gates were originally connected to the building activities of King Solomon (1 Kings 9:15). However, later archaeological work called into question whether these should indeed be dated to the tenth century BCE or to the time of King Omri, a century later. If, however, the United Monarchy emerged from a nomadic background, there is no need to reconstruct a kingdom characterized by only monumental remains.

LONG-LIVED LAND. Israel's Shephelah region—the foothills between the coastal plain and the highlands—has been settled by different peoples for millennia. The nearly continuous settlement, along with farming and environmental disruptions, complicates our ability to find archaeological remains of nomadic Israelites. This image shows an area near Azekah.

moving between the Transjordanian highlands and the Jordan Valley, making Mahanaim a good place from which to levy the king's taxes as they came past.

It is also likely that the very frequent Hebrew term *'ir* (plural: *'arim*), which is most commonly translated as "city" or "town," could sometimes refer to a pastoral-nomadic encampment. Numbers 13:19, for example, clearly indicates that *'ir* could be a fortified place or an unwalled camp (Hebrew: *mehaneh*). We also have Judges 10:4, where *'arim* are equated with encampments (Hebrew: *hawot*), and 1 Samuel 15:5, where we find *'ir Amalek*, which should be understood as the central camp of the Amalekites, a pastoral-nomadic group from the desert lands south of Judah. As such, it may well be that many of the "cities" we read about in the narratives of early Israel and the kingdom of David and Solomon should actually be imagined as camps of pastoral-nomadic clans or communities made up of both settled families and tent dwellers.

On the surface, it might seem that our argument stands in contrast to the possibility of a powerful United Monarchy. After all, how could nomads, whom we typically think of as fragmented and unruly, create a kingdom? For most people, the word "nomad" brings to mind the 19th-century stories of European explorers who had to pay bribes to nomadic tribes to cross the Ottoman Empire's more lawless territories. In fact, this very perception is the main reason why biblical scholars and archaeologists alike could not imagine nomads as being part of the ancient Israelite kingdom, despite the biblical and anthropological evidence to the contrary.

Although rare, powerful nomadic kingdoms are certainly known to history. Indeed, if we widen our historical and geographical perspective, we find the well-known empire of the Mongol nomads created by Genghis Khan in the 13th century. From the Near East, we have the Middle Bronze Age kingdom of Mari along the Euphrates, which was composed of a dynamic mix of sedentary people and pastoral nomads, often within the same tribal groups.

Closer in time and place with ancient Israel, there is the biblical Kingdom of Edom. Recent archaeological

biblicalarchaeology.org/nomads Listen to an exclusive interview with Erez Ben-Yosef, the director of the Timna excavations.

work at sites such as Timna and Wadi Faynan in the Aravah region south of the Dead Sea has uncovered evidence of a highly organized nomadic society that mined, smelted, and traded vast quantities of copper during the early Iron Age (12th–9th centuries BCE). Based on their location, this nomadic group can be identified with the biblical Edomites (2 Samuel 8:13; 1 Kings 11:15–17).

Importantly, however, archaeologists can see these Edomites only because of the remains of their copper industry, which left thousands of mines and rich assemblages of artifacts in the waste piles of the smelting sites. Yet we are missing evidence for where they lived, as no remains of their tents or houses have been found. Without the evidence of their copper industry, this powerful kingdom would otherwise be invisible.

We can infer from the Edomite case that the ancient Israelites also established a powerful—though archaeologically inconspicuous—kingdom that had a substantial nomadic element. This idea is supported by the unique situation that prevailed in the southern Levant during the early Iron Age. With the collapse of the stabilizing presence of the Egyptian empire in Canaan and a deteriorating climate that gave economic and political advantages to more mobile societies,[2] groups that formerly were on the fringes were able to accumulate power. As such, it was during this period that nomads were able to create tribal coalitions and rule over the city-states and settled peoples who had once had the upper hand.

Such nomadic polities are typically united less by monumental architecture or royal building projects than through the creation of real or imagined kinship bonds, where the ruler is viewed as the head of one big family. In the Bible, David and Solomon are portrayed as patriarchs who ruled over the one great house that is Israel (2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 12:19). This repeats a very similar pattern of social and political organization that we see throughout the Near East, a pattern that showed

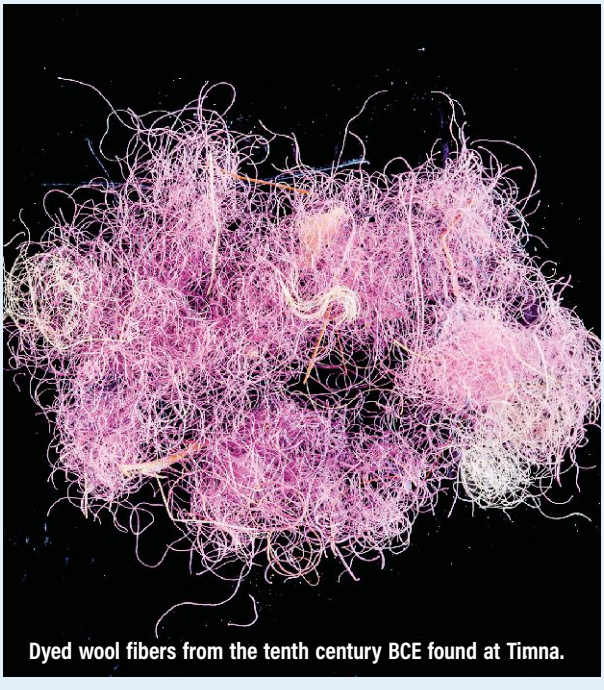
PHOTO COURTESY OF EREZ BEN-YOSEF AND THE CENTRAL TIMNA VALLEY PROJECT

Evidence from Edom

ZACHARY THOMAS AND **EREZ BEN-YOSEF**

Until about ten years ago, the vast copper mines of the Timna Valley were considered to be the project of the New Kingdom Egyptian empire, dating to the 13th and early 12th centuries BCE. However, when new excavations took place, it became clear that Timna thrived *after* the Egyptians left the region, with production peaking during the late 11th and 10th centuries. This intense production was orchestrated by local nomadic tribes, who together with the tribes of the northern Aravah, were part of the emerging Edomite kingdom.

The excavations revealed ample evidence for the existence of an elite class, including fragments of garments dyed with royal purple (Hebrew: *argaman*), an expensive dye made from Mediterranean sea snails. Other evidence included high-quality foods brought to the valley from hundreds of miles away, such as almonds, grapes, pomegranates, and Mediterranean fish, as well as a large collection of beads and other ornaments. These finds attest a wealthy and large-scale industry that included the operation of numerous copper mines—some more than 125 feet deep—and the use of advanced smelting technologies by highly skilled craftsmen.



Dyed wool fibers from the tenth century BCE found at Timna.

PHOTO BY DAFNA GAZIT, COURTESY OF THE ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

PHOTO COURTESY OF EREZ BEN-YOSEF AND THE CENTRAL TIMNA VALLEY PROJECT

TIMNA'S TESTIMONY. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of copper industry at Timna from the early Iron Age (12th–9th centuries BCE). These images show "Slaves' Hill," a large copper smelting camp where the remains of furnaces and ore-processing workshops have been discovered (below). The copper industry at Timna and nearby sites can be connected to the biblical Edomites, a nomadic people who lived in the arid region south of the Dead Sea. If not for the copper industry, with its mines and smelting sites, their powerful early Iron Age kingdom would have been largely invisible to archaeologists.

little concern for whether someone led a nomadic or settled life.

Does all this mean there is no way for archaeology to uncover David and Solomon's "invisible" nomadic kingdom? The archaeological sciences may provide some hope. Analysis of animal bones from Israelite settlement sites, for example, may indicate the presence of pastoralist elements who were also part of the same tribes and communities.[3] Such advances, however, do not get around the fundamental archaeological invisibility of nomads and, thus, the problem of trying to study a kingdom that is largely invisible to modern scholars.

When it comes to the quest for David and Solomon's kingdom, biblical archaeologists have long assumed that we can excavate our way to an answer. If we can only nail down the chronology of Megiddo or securely identify David as the ruler responsible for Khirbet Qeiyafa, all will be settled. But as important as these sites may be for understanding the tenth century, they do not give the full story of David and Solomon's kingdom. They may be only a few bright lights on what, for archaeologists, is a long street almost entirely in shadow.

[1] For a detailed review of our arguments, see Erez Ben-Yosef and Zachary Thomas, "Complexity Without Monumentality in Biblical Times," *Journal of Archaeological Research* (2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10814-023-09184-0.

[2] A growing body of evidence indicates a period of severe drought that lasted about 150 years, from the mid-13th to the late 12th century BCE; see Eric H. Cline, *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2021). It is likely that mobile societies were able to adapt more easily than city dwellers to changes in the availability of water and pastureland.

[3] Kara Larson, Elizabeth Arnold, and James W. Hardin, "Resource Allocation and Rising Complexity During the Iron Age IIA: An Isotopic Case Study from Khirbet Summeily, Israel," *Quaternary International* 646 (February 10, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2022.03.022.

Jerusalem's Temple Treasures

Where Did They Go?

ELENA DUGAN

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, people have hunted for the lost treasures of the First and Second Jerusalem Temples. The story begins about 2,500 years ago, when several biblical accounts—2 Kings 25:13–17, 2 Chronicles 36:18–19, and Jeremiah 52:17–23—narrate the removal of treasures from the First Temple by the invading Babylonian armies. Most of these Temple implements (or vessels; Hebrew: *kelim*) are reported restored in Ezra 1:6–11 and 5:14–17. Taken together, these biblical passages suggest that some treasures may have had a temporary stay in Babylon, but most returned to Jerusalem and came to rest in the rebuilt Second Temple. The First Temple treasures, according to this tradition, wandered a bit, but were largely protected within the walls of the Second Temple.

After the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, that belief snapped. The Temple had been sacked, its treasures plundered, and the vessels were nowhere to be found. Where they went has been an open question.

Most quests to find the lost Temple treasures have set their sights on two promising locations. Taking their cues from ancient Roman sources such as the writings of Josephus and the reliefs from the Arch of Titus, some think the implements are located in Rome.* Rumors of glittering lampstands stashed in dark Vatican archives have long swirled and resurface even today. As recently as last year, a Vatican guard claimed to have spotted a shining menorah hidden in a mysterious storeroom located at the end of a narrow and cramped tunnel.[1]

Others think the implements are hidden somewhere in the Holy Land. Some take their cue from ancient Jewish apocalyptic works like *2 Baruch*, which holds that the greatest treasures of the Temple were swallowed up by the earth near Jerusalem before the Babylonians could loot them. And the discovery of caches like the Dead Sea Scrolls, not least among them the enigmatic Copper Scroll that gives clues to no fewer than 64 caches of gold and silver, fueled speculation that the Temple treasures were hidden away almost 2,000 years ago in scattered locations across Israel and Transjordan.**

More recently, however, a new

* Steven Fine, "The Temple Menorah—Where Is It?" **BAR**, July/August 2005.

** Joan E. Taylor, "Secrets of the Copper Scroll," **BAR**, July/August/September/October 2019.

ERICH LESSING / ART RESOURCE, NY

LOST LOOT. Jerusalem's holy sanctuary was looted and destroyed twice, first by the Babylonians, in 586 BCE, and then by the Romans, who destroyed the rebuilt Second Temple in 70 CE. Different sources and traditions suggest the spoils from the Second Temple stayed in the Holy Land or were carried away to Rome, as depicted in this famous relief from the Arch of Titus in Rome that commemorates the conquest of Jerusalem. While the Book of Ezra claims the precious implements of Solomon's Temple returned from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, the *Treatise of the Vessels* insists they remained hidden away in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. How did this alternative tradition develop, and what may it reveal about the location of the lost Temple treasures?

text has entered the conversation—a Hebrew work known as *Massekhet Kelim*, or *Treatise of the Vessels*, which insists that the treasures from the First Temple remained buried in the heart of Babylonia, in caches between the Tigris and the Euphrates.[2]

Massekhet Kelim tells the story of the hiding of the implements of the First Temple in advance of and shortly after the Babylonian capture and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Most of the work is a long-form list enumerating lavish and outlandish treasures, where they were hidden, and by whom. The Levites, for instance, reportedly hid 200,000 talents' worth of pearls in a tower. Seventy-seven tables of gold, taken from the walls of the Garden of Eden, were allegedly hidden in what has been translated as the "treasure of the cistern." A thousand lyres and 7,000 lutes, crafted by King David himself and coated in gold, were supposedly buried by Baruch and Zedekiah at the Spring of Zedekiah. And so the text continues, promising that all these implements would remain hidden until the coming of "David, son of David" (the messiah), when they will "ascend and reveal themselves."

One might hope for a clear set of X's marking the spot. But, as it turns out, *Massekhet Kelim* has a very complicated textual history that will slow down anyone looking for discrete geographic locations. *Massekhet Kelim* has come down to the modern world in two main ways. The first is through a series of Hebrew books, printed between the 17th and 20th centuries, that collect and transmit materials on topics of interest to Jewish communities. Many of these works are midrash, or community histories of interpretation of sacred texts like the Bible. When *Massekhet Kelim* appears in them, it

is framed as a kind of antiquarian curiosity but comes with little other identifying information. This means the work is likely older than the early modern period, but we have no idea just how old it is—guesses have ranged from late antiquity (c. third–seventh centuries CE) right up until the 17th century—and nobody knows who wrote it.

The second way *Massekhet Kelim* has popped up in the modern world is more interesting still: through a collection of stone plaques on which is inscribed the entire Book of Ezekiel—currently at the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. The mysterious and unprovenanced plaques, now surmised to be modern forgeries, likely once included two additional tablets inscribed with the beginning of *Massekhet Kelim* (see sidebar, p. 50). Now lost, the two tablets are known to us only through a picture of the first of them that appeared, along with a partial transcription of both stones, in a 1959 French translation of *Massekhet Kelim* by J.T. Milik, famous scholar of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[3]

The problem is that each version of *Massekhet Kelim* provides a different "treasure map." The version inscribed on the Ezekiel plaques included a prologue, not found in the printed books, which sets the reader atop Mt. Carmel in northern Israel. It tells the "children of Israel" that the Temple vessels are hidden at the top of a mountain, behind a closed gate. The reference to Mt. Carmel seems to situate the text within the bounds of the Holy Land. The plaques also reference the heroic actions of Baruch and Zedekiah, two figures celebrated elsewhere in midrash and folklore for their actions in the Holy Land, before the rampaging arrival of the Babylonians. Otherwise, however, the plaques seem to provide very little information to go on. But the general picture is of Holy Land caches, waiting for the coming of the messiah.

The version of *Massekhet Kelim* found in early modern books, by comparison, is quite clear: The First Temple implements are to be found in and around Babylon. According to this version, libation jars bedecked with hundreds of thousands of talents' worth of gold were hidden away "in the land of Babylon," in a city called Bagdat (Baghdad). It avers that the stones with which the Temple was built were hidden "from before Nebuchadnezzar." It reports that the fine stones, pearls, silver, and gold set aside for "the Great House" were hidden in Borsif

CCO 1.0; COURTESY OF BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK

VANISHED VESSELS. An obscure Hebrew treatise called *Massekhet Kelim* (*Treatise of the Vessels*) claims the precious implements of Solomon's Temple were not returned to Jerusalem but rather stayed in Babylonia. While its origins are unclear, the text was first printed in 1648 by the German kabbalist Naphtali ben Jacob Elhanan Bacharach in his famous book *Sefer Emeq ha-Melekh* (*The King's Valley*; see title page here). A slightly different version of the treatise allegedly survived on two stone tablets that were partially published in 1959 but are now considered lost.

NATHAN STEINMEYER

EZEKIEL PLAQUES. A set of 66 stone tablets, allegedly from the prophet Ezekiel's traditional tomb in Al-Kifl, Iraq, contains the entire Book of Ezekiel. Currently on display at the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem, this collection originally included two more tablets, which were inscribed with a version of *Treatise of the Vessels* but are now considered lost (see sidebar, p. 50). Recent research suggests that the Ezekiel plaques—and, most likely, the two tablets inscribed with *Massekhet Kelim*—are modern forgeries, crafted in Syria in the early 20th century.

(Borsippa). The gold and silver treasuries from Kings David to Zedekiah were hidden "in the wall of Babylon, and at Tel Baruq, underneath the great willow that is in Babylon" (Tel Baruq possibly being the well-known site of Tell Brak in eastern Syria). This version also features a unique conclusion, suggesting that when the messiah comes, the Gihon will overflow unto the Euphrates, and only then will the vessels ascend and reveal themselves.

The center of gravity is firmly in Babylon. There is some expected deviation, of course. There are some places in the printed books where it seems that some Holy Land sites are in view (like the Spring of Zedekiah), and there are some places in the Ezekiel plaques where Babylonian sites are mentioned. But when the two versions are detangled, the geographic focus of their treasure caches becomes clear. The printed versions of *Massekhet Kelim* suggest the majority of the Temple implements are waiting, between the Tigris and the Euphrates, for the banks of the rivers to overflow (as they so often did), and for an eschatological flood to one day free the vessels from their hoards, to fly to the side of the coming messiah.

Ultimately, *Massekhet Kelim* does not tell us where the Temple treasures are currently hidden, as exciting as that might be. We do not walk away from *Massekhet Kelim* with a new, unified map for the priceless riches of the biblical kings. *Massekhet Kelim* was likely never meant to be an actual map—it is hardly specific enough for that! Instead, it operated in a genre that scholars of pre-modern Jewish literature are just beginning to understand, of fictional and imagined treasure. Different Jewish communities found comfort, power, or even entertainment in telling tales about the treasure they *might* have had, had things turned out differently; or treasure they once had, back in

The Mystery of the Missing Plaques

ELENA DUGAN

The Ezekiel plaques—and their relationship to the now-lost *Massekhet Kelim* plaques—are something of a mystery, as is their provenance. According to the original story, which goes back to the 1940s, the tablets were found more than a century ago at the traditional tomb of Ezekiel in Al-Kifl, Iraq, and thought to be anywhere between 300 and 2,000 years old.[1]

However, a recent study by Yoli Schwartz has revealed the Ezekiel plaques to be modern forgeries, crafted in Syria in the early 20th century.[2] They only appeared to be ancient. It seems likely that the very similar *Massekhet Kelim* plaques, though now lost, were forgeries as well. The plaques may have been created to feed the growing public appetite in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for biblical antiquities. Ancient-seeming tablets, engraved with clues as to the resting place of the Temple treasures, would have suited the fascination of the time perfectly.

The forged plaques arrived in Jerusalem in 1957 or 1958, ending up at the Ben-Zvi Institute, where they continue to be displayed today, now with clear reference to their intriguing though problematic provenance and history.

J.T. Milik, the only scholar to work with the two lost *Massekhet Kelim* tablets, is our sole source of information that they were once part of the collection of Ezekiel plaques. The picture Milik published of the first of the two plaques (seen here) does show some visual similarity in layout and script to the Ezekiel plaques on display, but such parallelism is not conclusive.

From Milik's published transcription (albeit incomplete), we can see that the text of *Massekhet Kelim* on the plaques has been modified to better suit its location next to the Book of Ezekiel. It begins "and he said to me," where the "he" can only be Ezekiel. This small addition may be consequential, as it might transform *Massekhet Kelim* (or, at least, its prologue, which appears only on the plaques) into a revelation purportedly imparted by Ezekiel himself!

What happened to the plaques after Milik's brief inspection? Their ascription to a major biblical prophet, their monumental appearance, and the tantalizing subject matter of lost Temple treasures may have made the *Massekhet Kelim* plaques all too tempting for a private collector. It is plausible that a collection of purported biblical antiquities moving across the newly formed border of the State of Israel might have lost a few component parts on the journey. And so, the answers to some questions about this version of *Massekhet Kelim* must remain hidden, unless the stones resurface.

[1] Florence Bache and David Parsons, "Dating the Ezekiel Plates," *The Jerusalem Post* (May 1, 2011).

[2] See Yoli Schwartz, *The Riddle of the Ezekiel Tiles*, M.A. Thesis (Beersheba: Ben-Gurion University, 2021 [Hebrew]).

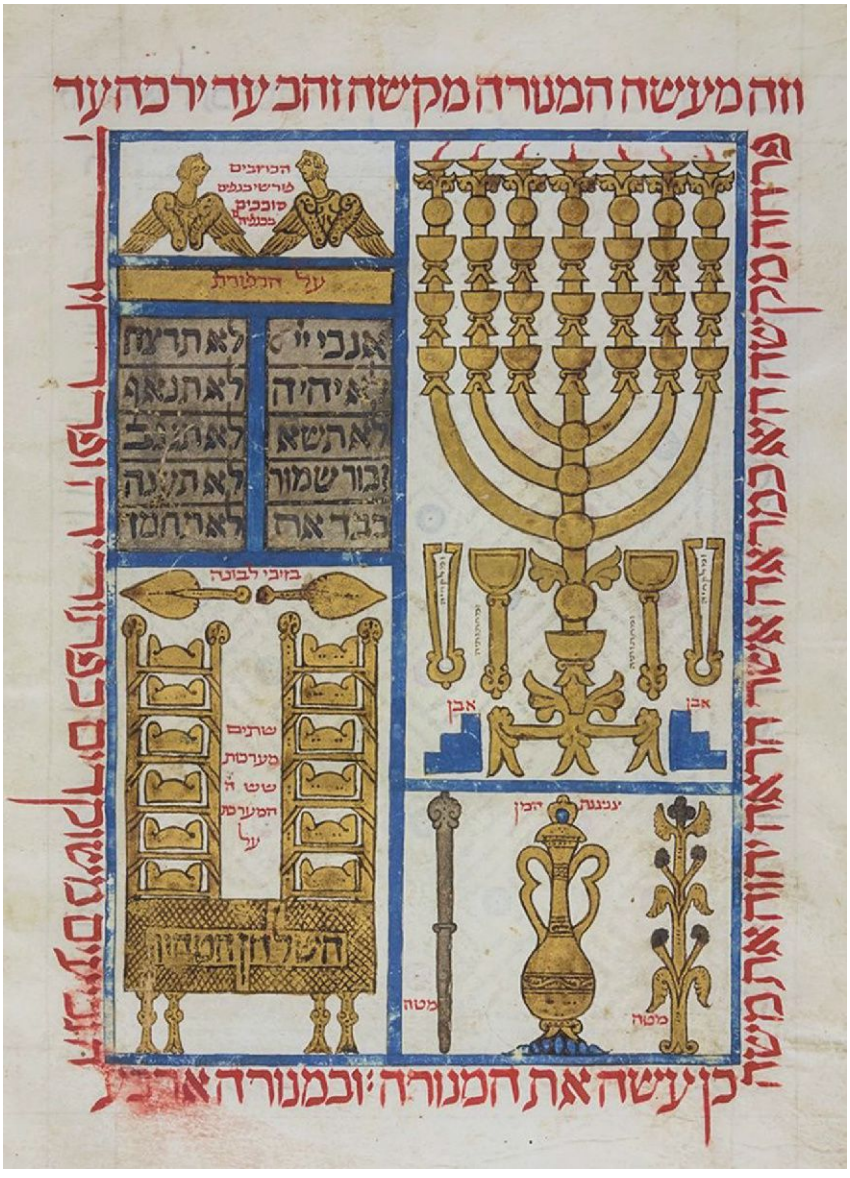
FROM *REVUE BIBLIQUE* 66 (1959), PLATE XV; COURTESY OF ÉCOLE BIBLIQUE ET ARCHÉOLOGIQUE FRANÇAISE DE JÉRUSALEM

the day; or treasure they might still have, if only they knew exactly how to find it!

It does seem, however, that an older version of *Massekhet Kelim* is reflected in the early modern books. This version placed the treasures in and around Babylon. Historically speaking, this is an unusual resolution for where the lost Temple treasures rest, as it resists the expected temptation to locate the treasures in the Holy Land or Rome. Remember that biblical texts, particularly Ezra, insist that the implements returned from their Babylonian exile, and their subsequent fate was tied to the Second Temple and its destruction by the Romans. In contrast, the insistence of *Massekhet Kelim* that these vessels didn't just sojourn by the Tigris but stayed there for centuries—and would stay put until the very coming of the messiah—would feel very strange to someone operating within that tradition of history and memory.

Why Babylon? One possibility is that this "map" was produced by Abbasid-era (eighth–eleventh centuries CE) Babylonian Jews, living in an era in which Baghdad was the capital of the empire ruling the known world; the ghost of Rome had ceased to be quite so important as in centuries past. This was also the period in which Babylonian rabbinic academies were flourishing, and the "rabbinization" of Jewish communities around the Mediterranean and Near East was well underway. It is suggestive that the Babylon-centric version of the work has more than a few uniquely rabbinic flourishes.[4] Perhaps this work is best understood

To learn more about the problems associated with objects that lack a secure provenance, visit **biblicalarchaeology.org/unprovenanced**.



BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, MANUSCRIT HÉBREU 7

TEMPLE TRADITIONS. Following the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, Jewish tradition came to believe that Torah reading and study could replace the offering of Temple sacrifices. Some medieval copies of the Hebrew Bible even evoked the memory of the Temple by including vivid imagery that directly associated Judaism's holy book with the "Temple of God" (*Mikdashyah*). Probably the earliest example of this is found in the Perpignan Bible. Created in 1299, the parchment manuscript contains gold illumination of the Temple implements. This striking imagery is surrounded by texts that quote biblical passages describing the implements and expressing the hope that the Temple will soon be rebuilt.

as a little bit of hometown pride mixed with a pinch of rabbinic propaganda, as Abbasid-era Babylonian Jews claimed the blockbuster treasure of yore to be safe in their own backyards, with the clues to its discovery written in their own distinctively rabbinic idiom.

Conversely, the version on the Ezekiel plaques feels like an attempt to change the map a bit and imaginatively rebury the treasure in some of the more usual hiding places in the Holy Land. By skimming off some of the Babylonian references, and adding a little extra focus on the Holy Land, someone stitched *Massekhet Kelim* into the more popular quilt of legends alleging that the implements remained in the Holy Land. In this case, the importance of the version on the Ezekiel plaques may be in affirming just how strange the Babylon-centric version is: It was so peculiar to allege that the Temple vessels were in Babylon, apparently, that a later reader took it upon themselves to correct such a claim! And if the missing plaques are indeed modern forgeries, the change may also have been even more calculated: Artifacts tied to the Holy Land, rather than Babylon, would prompt more vociferous public interest (and selling power). But no matter when exactly they were created, the plaques show the cultural cachet vested in Holy Land sites for the Temple treasures.

Ultimately, the real story of *Massekhet Kelim* is one of communities suffused with stories, legends, rumors, suspicions, and dreams of a blockbuster treasure as valuable as it is mysterious. Through close study of the manuscripts and versions, it is possible to glean an unusual solution to the resting place of the priceless treasures of the Jerusalem Temple: The implements, some thought, were still hidden in Babylon. But over the centuries even this solution was buried under a competing account, and it takes a little textual archaeology to dust off this very curious—and valuable—treasure map.

[1] Harry H. Moskoff, "Is There New Evidence of Jewish Temple Treasures in the Vatican?" *The Jerusalem Post* (February 10, 2022).

[2] The treatise received a full English translation only in 2013: James Davila, "The Treatise of the Vessels (*Massekhet Kelim*)," in Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, & Alexander Panayotov, eds., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 393–409. For more, see Elena Dugan, "Unearthing Babylonian Treasure Caches and Textual Fluidity within Massekhet Kelim," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 28.2 (2021), pp. 111–136.

[3] See Jozef T. Milik, "Notes d'épigraphie et de topographie palestiniennes," *Revue Biblique* 66.4 (1959), pp. 567–575, plate XIV.

[4] For example, the title "Massekhet Kelim" is also the title of a tractate in the Mishnah. Moreover, the Babylon-centric versions even label the treasure-caches as "Mishnah I," "Mishnah II," and so on.

The Amorites and the Bible

AARON A. BURKE

IN THE BIBLE, THE AMORITES are frequently mentioned among Canaan's original inhabitants, those who lived in the land before the Israelites. Yet the Amorites received a pointed condemnation unlike any reserved for another group. They are called out for their impure religious practices and deviant gods (e.g., Genesis 15:16; Joshua 24:15; 1 Kings 21:26).

Who were these detested "Amorites," and how did the biblical writers think about them?

There is a legendary quality to Israelite memories of Canaan's earliest inhabitants, including the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Canaanites, and Amorites (Numbers 13:29). The Israelite spies who first entered the land characterized them as "strong" and their towns as "fortified and very large" (Numbers 13:28, ESV).

What is more, the biblical writers perceived all of these groups to have descended from antediluvian heroes and giants, namely the Nephilim (the legendary offspring of the "sons of God" and "daughters of man" from Genesis 6:4). This is revealed in Numbers 13 where each group is described as "the children of Anak," the eponymous ancestor of the gigantic Anakim. The text then goes on to state that "the Anakim come from the Nephilim" (Numbers 13:33). Thus, in just a few short verses, the inhabitants of Canaan, including the Amorites, are presented as the descendants of the Nephilim.

Even before Israel's conquest, the Amorites are already identified as inhabitants of Canaan in the Bible. Mamre "the Amorite" was an ally of Abram (Abraham) and assisted him in retrieving his nephew Lot from his captors (Genesis 14). Abram pitched his tent by the "oaks of Mamre" and later encountered the entourage of the "angel of Yahweh" in this region before its fateful trip to Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18–19).

Amorites are also said to inhabit the hill

country of Judah (Numbers 13:29; Joshua 9:10) and live west of Ephraim and throughout southern Judah (Judges 1:34–36). It was perhaps because of the close association of Amorites with Judean territory that this group was often identified as the source of deviant, non-Israelite worship. Thus, the biblical authors implore the Israelites not to serve "the gods of the Amorites" (Joshua 24:15) and, later, denounce King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom as having "acted most abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done" (1 Kings 21:26).

BATTLE ROYALE. Joshua 10 describes how five Amorite kings attacked Gibeon, a city that had made peace with Israel. The Israelites came to the aid of the Gibeonites and scattered the Amorites. This 17th-century painting by Nicolas Poussin, *The Victory of Joshua over the Amorites*, depicts the battle.

Elsewhere, the Bible also identifies the highlands east of the Jordan as Amorite land. In Deuteronomy 3, for example, Og of Bashan and Sihon of Heshbon are described as "the two kings of the Amorites" from "the land beyond the Jordan." King Og, in particular, is clearly

and unambiguously presented as a giant of old. He ruled over the "land of Rephaim," and Og's gigantic iron bed, a relic of this bygone age, is described as being "nine cubits long and four cubits wide" (about 13.5 ft long and 6 ft wide). Although the bed was allegedly constructed of iron, its biblical portrayal may have been inspired by the huge stone dolmens found across northern Israel and the Transjordanian highlands. Dated to the Early Bronze Age (3800–2000 BCE), these imposing structures may have been viewed by the biblical writers as the beds of Amorite giants.

The reference to King Og's bed is a prime example of how the Israelites developed a mythology to explain and understand the physical landscape around them. The former inhabitants of Canaan, such as the Amorites and their Anakim neighbors, were seen as responsible for elements of the built landscape that the Israelites encountered. Vestiges of this earlier landscape included impressive monuments, fortifications, water systems, and stone monoliths, many of which the biblical writers note were still visible at the time they were writing.

Perhaps most ubiquitous within the landscape were the remains of Middle Bronze Age (c. 2000–1550 BCE) fortifications.[1] Indeed, as the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, their spies bemoaned the great defenses of cities they found there: "Our kindred have made our hearts melt by reporting, 'The people are stronger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified up to heaven!'" (Deuteronomy 1:28).

Between 1800 and 1600 BCE, massive fortifications were laid around sites large and small throughout Canaan. Some of these continued to function into the Late Bronze Age (c. 1550–1100 BCE) when they gradually fell out of use. The construction of these fortification systems was

MEGAN SAUTER

TODD BOLEN / BIBLEPLACES.COM

MONUMENTAL MEGALITHS. Large dolmens dot the landscape of the Galilee, Golan, and Transjordan. These table-like monuments, which consist of large horizontal stones laid across upright, vertical stones, likely served as funerary structures, though the Israelites possibly imagined them to be the beds of Amorite giants. The below dolmens, near Gamla, probably date to the Early or Intermediate Bronze Age.

FEARSOME FORTIFICATIONS. Ashkelon's fortifications do indeed look like they were assembled by giants—or at least people with gigantic skill. The Middle Bronze Age fortifications comprised a steeply sloped rampart with a wall on top and a fosse (dry moat) below. The earthwork rampart was capped with mudbricks or field stones and coated with mud plaster to create a smooth exterior, thereby making it nearly impossible to scale. Incorporated into the rampart was a sanctuary (see sign in the above photo), where archaeologists found a silver calf (see right), located near the city's north gate.

ZEV RADOVAN / BIBLELANDPICTURES.COM

usually centered on a massive core wall. Against this wall, layers of earth were heaped to create a defensible rampart. The slopes were crowned with a large mudbrick fortification wall. Stone revetment walls were often constructed at the base of the slope. These provided yet another barrier to the ascent toward the fortification wall. Below this revetment lay a fosse or dry moat that served to expose the approach of would-be attackers while they were still some distance from the wall's base.

Collectively, these defensive elements were intended to thwart siege warfare. The fosse kept siege machinery, such as siege towers and wheeled battering rams, from advancing, while relatively loose earthen ramparts bedeviled efforts to tunnel through or undermine the fortifications. The fortification wall's sheer thickness dulled the effectiveness of battering rams and hampered efforts to dig through it, especially as arrows harangued the attackers from towers protruding from the fortification line.

By the start of the first millennium BCE, when states such as early Israel and Judah had emerged, nearly all the elements of Middle Bronze Age fortifications had fallen into disuse, being buried under successive strata of later Canaanite cities. Even so, as a result of the significant investment of labor and resources, elements of these massive building projects remained foundational to the layout, topography, and sometimes even defense of later settlements. It is not difficult to imagine various Israelite building projects encountering these remains during their construction. The cyclopean masonry of their curtain and revetment walls sometimes protruded above the surface, giving silent witness to massive building projects of an earlier age. Such remains likely were visible at both Jerusalem and Hebron. At still other sites, particularly those whose fortifications were built on low-lying plains, such as Tell Batash (likely biblical Timnah) in the Shephelah, Middle Bronze Age fortifications served as the very foundations that gave shape to the physical space of Iron Age (c. 1100–539 BCE) towns.

Water systems, another integral element of Middle Bronze Age defenses, played a role in the biblical narrative as well. Jerusalem's early water system, centered on the Gihon Spring, constructed and enclosed by its own fortification walls, was likely the setting for David's clandestine entry into Jebusite Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6–9). Other Bronze Age water systems that likely survived into the first millennium include an example from Gezer, as well as less-securely dated systems from Megiddo and Amman.

Also common to the landscapes of ancient Israel and Judah were stone monoliths, often called standing stones. Gigantic in size, these monuments were part of the commemorative landscape of the Middle Bronze Age. One impressive collection of such monoliths was excavated at Gezer, where ten monoliths, some standing nearly 10 feet tall, were preserved in the center of the Canaanite city.

DANIEL FRESE / BIBLEPLACES.COM

STANDING STONES. Monoliths, some measuring 10 feet tall, stand in the center of Gezer, a major Canaanite city. They were set up during the Middle Bronze Age probably to serve a commemorative purpose.

Legendary Amorites

AARON A. BURKE

SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY

However the Israelites understood the "Amorites" of biblical legend, peoples known as Amorites had lived across the ancient Near East for more than a thousand years. They are first attested among third-millennium Sumerian sources as a people from the "west," mostly northwest of Sumer up the Euphrates River. Although traditionally identified by scholars as pastoralists, Amorites played many roles in Mesopotamian society, including as mercenaries. By the second millennium, they comprised as much as 10 percent of the urban population of southern Mesopotamia and had still greater numbers in major cities to the west, like Mari along the Euphrates. By the 18th century BCE, many of the most notable rulers of cities, such as Babylon, Ur, Mari, and Assur, identified as Amorite. In the southern Levant, kings with Amorite names ruled cities from Hazor to Ashkelon. Although much remains uncertain about the spread of Amorite culture and traditions, their cities and kingdoms helped establish a prolonged period of intensive social, economic, and political connections across the Near East that only began to recede during the Late Bronze Age (c. 1550–1100 BCE). By the first millennium, when Israel was first writing down the stories of its arrival in the land, the Amorites were little more than legend.

The above wall painting (c. 1780 BCE) depicts a procession of Amorites leading a bull to a sacrifice. It comes from the palace of Mari in eastern Syria.

Such stelae were, by and large, commemorative in function, something made evident by biblical references that acknowledge the continued existence of such monuments during the first millennium. Referring to them as *massebot* (singular: *massebah*), the biblical authors often attributed these stones to the patriarch Jacob, who is said to have taken a stone and made it a *massebah* at Bethel (Genesis 28:18). He did so again when he made a covenant with Laban (Genesis 31:45) and once more at Bethel to commemorate God's renaming him Israel (Genesis 35:14). Jacob's connection to the land before the Egyptian sojourn certainly made him a prime candidate for association with such pre-Israelite monuments.

In light of Jacob's association with commemorative stones, it is perhaps unsurprising that Jacob's sons, the eponymous ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel, should also have been commemorated with standing stones. Joshua is said to have marked the crossing of the Jordan River, for example, by erecting 12 stones "in the middle of the Jordan" (Joshua 4:4–6).

Despite the actions of revered patriarchal figures like Jacob, what was permissible in an earlier age was viewed, like the Amorites, as anathema in later times. The Book of Leviticus, often regarded as late legal tradition, explicitly decries erecting "a pillar" (*massebah*; 26:1). Nevertheless, much smaller pillars continued to be erected across ancient Israel throughout the Iron Age, whether in gateways, temples, or private homes.

Although it is difficult to reconstruct a coherent picture of ancient Israel's mythologies surrounding the Amorites, the Bible does preserve glimpses of them. The landscape of ancient Canaan bore the marks of monuments left over from the Bronze Age that took on cultural associations with historical groups and individuals. Regardless of the historical validity of such associations, it is crucial to consider how the remnants of earlier times were understood by the Israelites and Judahites who experienced them as part of the world in which they lived.

[1] Aaron A. Burke, *"Walled Up to Heaven": The Evolution of Middle Bronze Age Fortification Strategies in the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008).

Balm of Gilead

ZOHAR AMAR

ZORI IS MENTIONED SIX TIMES in the Bible as a prestigious and well-known medical product. Often translated "balm," it was a prized product of the biblical lands, especially the region of Gilead (Genesis 37:25; Jeremiah 8:22). Its importance is reflected by its appearance at the top of a list of medicines and perfumes called "the choice produce of the land" (Genesis 43:11).

But what exactly is *zori*?

There is no doubt that the biblical text reflects an authentic product, since *zori* also appears in a 14th-century BCE letter from the well-known Amarna archive: The queen of Ugarit sent a small jug of *zori* as tribute to the queen of Egypt.[1] Much later, in the Roman period, it became a term for the "balsam of Judah," a perfume shrub. In earlier periods, though, it referred to something else entirely.

I think that the resin of the Atlantic pistachio tree (*Pistacia atlantica*) is the best candidate for biblical *zori*. The Atlantic pistachio, also called Atlantic terebinth, is a large tree with a thick central trunk and extensive foliage. Its small, edible fruits are rich in oil and probably the "nuts" (Hebrew: *botnim*) mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 43:11). The tree is common to the dry regions of the southern Levant, and, to this day, there are a few very large, old pistachio trees on the eastern bank of the Jordan River above the mountains of Gilead in Jordan.

In 2019, I visited the village of Jalad (Gilead) and was informed that the trees had been used to

Atlantic pistachio trees in the Judean lowland.

COURTESY ZOHAR AMAR

A South Arabian incense burner with a Sabaic inscription that names four types of incense, including *darw* (fifth–fourth century BCE).

produce resin, but the practice stopped completely around 2000. The residents said that it is still customary to pick the fruits of the terebinth tree (*Pistacia terebinthus*), a relative of the Atlantic pistachio tree, at the end of summer.

The identification of biblical *zori* with the resin of the Atlantic pistachio tree is supported by historical sources. The tree and its medicinal properties were described by the Greek philosopher Theophrastus, Roman philosopher Pliny, and Greek physician Dioscorides. The latter names the city of Petra, the capital of the Nabateans, who were known as traders in perfumes, as another locale for *zori*:

> The resin is brought out of Arabia Petraea … The preferred resin is most clear, white, a glassy color and inclining to an azure [blue], fragrant, and smells like *terminthos* … Now all resin has a soothing, warming, dispersing, cleansing quality; good for coughs and consumption [wasting disease] taken in syrups (either by itself or with honey), purging what should be purged out of the chest. It is also diuretic, helps digestion, softens the intestines, and is good for retaining hair on the eyebrows … For ears which run with filthy matter it is applied with oil and honey, and it is effective for itching genitals.
>
> (*On Medical Material* 1.91)

There is also archaeological evidence for the export of large quantities of this resin from Canaan in the Late Bronze Age. In the cargo hold of a 14th-century BCE shipwreck at the site of Uluburun, off the coast of Turkey, remains were found of various raw materials and foods. These included dozens of Canaanite amphorae with hundreds of pounds of harvested resin from pistachio trees. From about the same time, pistachio tree resin was found in Canaanite amphorae and bowls at the site of Amarna in Egypt.

Another corroboration is the preservation of the name *zori* in the ancient Arabic name (*darw*) for Atlantic pistachio tree resin. This name appears in the Sabaic script in the lists of incense, spices, and perfumes engraved on many incense altars found in southern Arabia (modern Yemen). In the Persian polymath Al-Dinawari's (d. 895) ancient book of plants, a description of the Atlantic pistachio tree is given under the names *butum* and *darw*.

To learn more about how *zori* may have been harvested, my student Elron Zabatani and I reconstructed the traditional method of extracting the resin of the Atlantic pistachio from 80 trees in several different regions of Israel: the coastal plain, the Jerusalem hills, and the Golan. We based our method on the extraction of lentisk (*Pistacia lentiscus*) resin on the island of Chios in Greece and the method of extracting Atlantic pistachio resin in Iraqi Kurdistan. In these areas, the production of resin is a family business passed down from generation to generation and harvested every summer.

In the first step, the trees are cut with a spike or crowbar. After about a month, the sticky liquid resin is scraped off and collected, and over time it dries and crystallizes. A more efficient way to collect the resin is to attach a clay bowl under the cut made in the tree trunk. The resin slowly drips into the bowl, and then the liquid is siphoned into a collecting basin.

According to our calculations, 50 trees can produce about 33 pounds (15 kg) of resin per season. The amount of resin obtained from our experiment was more than from any other tree growing in the area of Israel and Syria. We found that large Atlantic pistachio trees could produce about 1 pound of resin. Although it is not possible to estimate how much resin was actually collected every year and how many people were involved in the process, the large amounts of resin we obtained confirm that this was indeed a profitable industry in the past.

Pistachio resin is still sold today in many countries in the region, including Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. It is used for various medicinal purposes, such as relieving throat infections, lowering cholesterol, treating stomach ulcers, alleviating stress, and more. After collection, the resin is cooked in water until it becomes a white liquid to dissipate the bitterness. Then wax is added to create a consistency that is easy to chew and is known as *alka*.

For millennia, the resin of the Atlantic pistachio tree was produced by the inhabitants of the southern Levant and exported to many other regions. Our study not only sheds light on this important economic industry but also connects it with biblical *zori*, the famed balm of Gilead.

[1] El Amarna document No. 48.

For step-by-step photos of the extraction process, see **biblicalarchaeology.org/balm**.

Five Myths About the Apostle Paul

DAVID CHRISTIAN CLAUSEN

HISTORIANS AND THEOLOGIANS, not to mention everyday readers, have wrestled with Paul's writings since his letters first began to circulate in the earliest Christian centuries (2 Peter 3:16). However, it seems that scholarship has now turned a decisive corner by coming to understand this prolific apostle in the context of his own social and religious milieu.[1] Much has changed to demystify Paul and help us understand him in a consistent, historical, and contextualized way. With this approach, many of the contradictions and misunderstandings surrounding Paul are resolved, and certain long-held myths evaporate. Let's look at how this works by addressing five myths associated with Paul.

Myth 1: Paul abandoned Judaism for Christianity.

This is one myth that most people have probably heard. Paul, the failed Jew, became Paul the triumphant founder or founding member of a new religion. The problem with this view is that Paul never wrote about founding a new religion. Historically, we know that there was no such thing as "Christianity" in the time of Paul, and the word "Christian" was likely not in use either. Paul was proud of his status as a faithful, Torah-observant Jew, and even said so (e.g., Romans 11:1; Galatians 1:14). In these passages, Paul was not describing what he was before his encounter with Christ but how he continued to be even afterward.

HIP / ART RESOURCE, NY

Modern mosaic of the apostle Paul's arrival in Neapolis (modern Kavala, Greece), located outside the Church of St. Nicholas in Kavala.

Paul's objective, as he made plain, was to bring pagan idolaters to a righteous standing before the God of Israel. In this, he believed he was participating in the fulfillment of end-time prophecies that spoke about the nations joining Israel in worship (e.g., Isaiah 56:6–7; Jeremiah 3:16–17).

Myth 2: Paul wrote to Jews and Gentiles, both for his time and for all time.

Several times Paul wrote plainly that he had been divinely chosen as an "apostle to the Gentiles," not an apostle to Jews. His gospel message was for the idolatrous nations (Romans 1:5; Galatians 1:16). His letters, though written to Christ-believing assemblies that sometimes included Jews, were always addressed to the Gentile members (e.g., 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; Galatians 4:8). Paul brought his gospel to those who had no covenant relationship with the God of Israel. He brought them a means for attaining righteousness: through baptism in the death (and resurrection) of Christ for the redemption of their sins (Romans 6:4). Paul, like all other Jews, had a variety of ways to atone for sin, as members of a righteous covenant with God. Paul brought to the nations news of a "new covenant" understood in terms of the prophecies of Jeremiah (31:31–34) and Ezekiel (36:24–28).

Paul's missionary horizon was short—he believed that Christ would return while he was still alive (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Thus, he did not write for future generations.

Myth 3: Paul taught a "law-free" gospel.

Even skimming through Paul's letters, it is clear that he never taught a "law-free" gospel that required only trust and not works. Paul was clear about Gentile obedience (e.g., Romans 15:18). He frequently taught many of God's laws that pertained equally to Gentiles as to Jews (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:11; 7:19). But Paul believed that the dispensation of the law through Moses to the Jews was specifically for Jews; it was their birthright as God's original adopted children (Romans 9:4). And as he said, the Torah and God's covenant with the Jews remained in effect (Galatians 3:15–17). Gentiles, however, required adoption (Galatians 4:4–5), and part of their requirements as adopted children was obedience to God's law as dispensed directly by God through the Spirit to each Gentile heart.

Myth 4: Paul taught that Christ died for the sins of the world.

Paul never said this. Paul clearly wrote that Christ died for the ungodly and for sinners (Romans 5:6, 8). He meant "sinners" just as the Gospels meant "sinners": those in danger of losing their membership in the covenant or those who were out of it altogether (Matthew 9:10–11; Luke 6:32). Paul wrote that he and Peter were not this kind of sinner (Galatians 2:15). The ungodly were idolatrous pagans. Jews already belonged to God. Yes, Jews sinned. But they had ample means of atonement already specified in the Torah and Jewish teaching. Gentiles had nothing like this. According to Paul, Christ had to die for them to be redeemed. Christ had to become cursed (fall outside the covenant) just like Gentiles (Galatians 3:13). But God redeemed and exalted him. By being baptized into Christ's death and deliverance (Romans 6:3–4), cursed Gentiles could share in his redemption and look forward to eternal life.

Myth 5: The meaning behind Paul's letters is self-evident.

Much misunderstanding about Paul comes from overlooking his rhetorical strategies. Paul used a variety of literary tools to ingratiate, implore, persuade, and ultimately convince his audience. For example, Paul frequently used the social plural ("we") when he wrote, identifying with his audience, even though he was not actually one of them. A classic example is when Paul writes as if he was one of the "ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Of course, he was not. Paul also wrote in character, that is, he wrote in someone else's voice for dramatic effect. A famous example is Romans 7 in which Paul wrote as if he were a Gentile sinner wrestling with Mosaic law.

* * *

There are other myths about Paul that result from our inability or reluctance to hear Paul for what he was: a first-century, Hellenistic Jew trained in Greek rhetoric and proficient in Pharisaic modes of scriptural exegesis. He used every tool at his disposal as an apostle to bring the Gentiles to obedience and spare them the wrath otherwise due them on the imminent Day of the Lord.

[1] For a thorough examination of Paul, see David Christian Clausen, *Meet Paul Again for the First Time: Jewish Apostle of Pagan Redemption* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021).

DEFINE INTERVENTION

What is "Dilmun"?

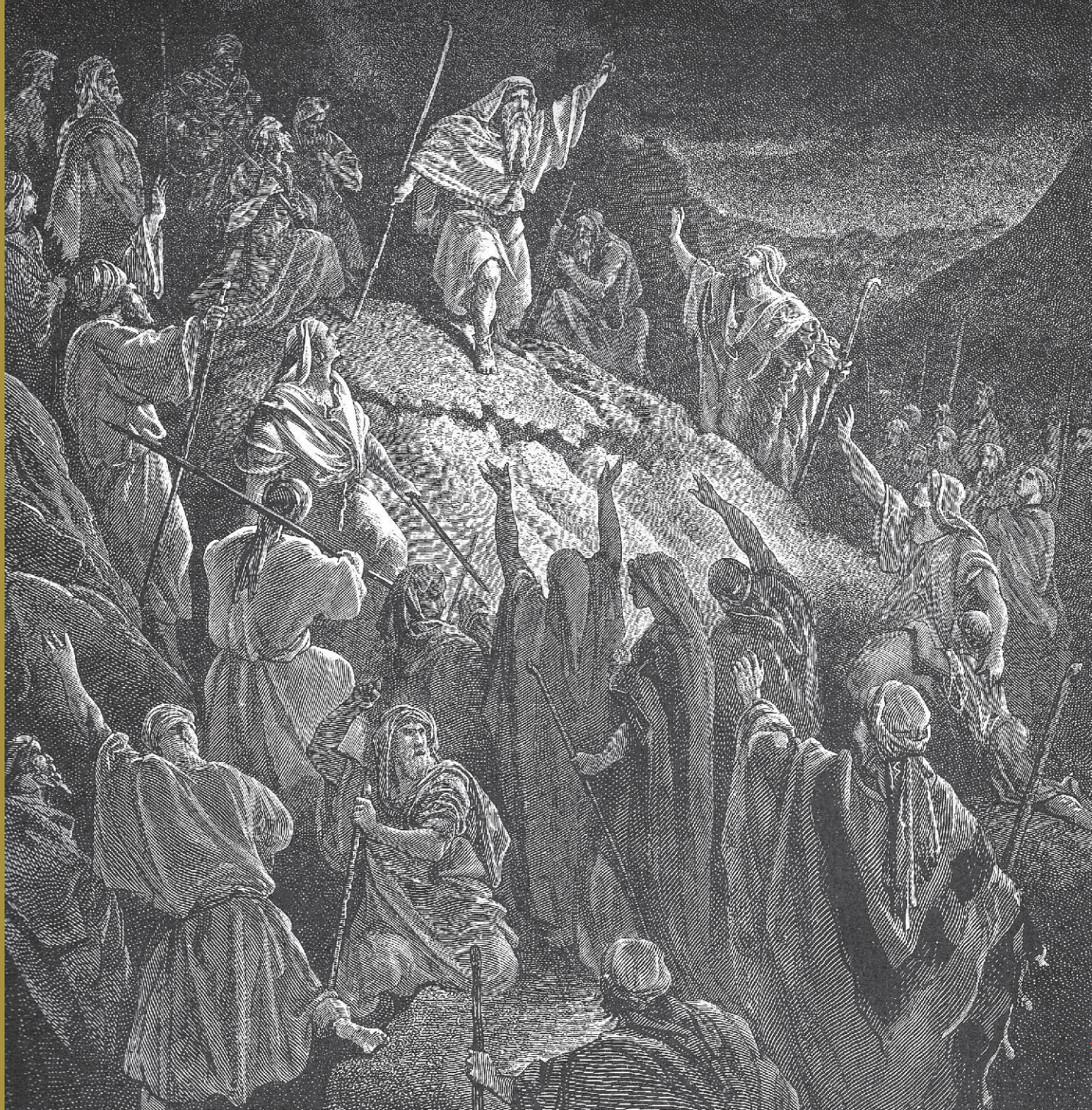
1. Desert oasis in Genesis
2. Mound that rose from the primordial waters
3. Island reserved for survivors of the Great Flood
4. Caravanserai on the Silk Road
5. Landing spot of Noah's Ark

ANSWER ON P. 66

Maccabees

The Book of 1 Maccabees records the Maccabean revolt—of Hanukkah fame—and the resultant Jewish kingdom. A Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons led the revolt against Greek rule in the second century BCE. Here, Mattathias is shown surrounded by supporters and refugees who had fled to the hills (1 Maccabees 2).

This wood engraving by Gustave Doré was published, along with 240 other biblical illustrations, in *La Grande Bible de Tours* in 1866. His intricate design would have been carved into a block of wood using a burin. Then the block would have been covered in ink and pressed against paper to create the illustration. Engraved blocks could be used on printing presses, which allowed for easy duplication. Although not the developer of the technique, Doré is probably the most famous wood engraver.



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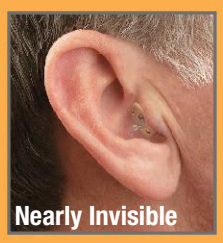

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Gilgamesh

A Mesopotamian Story of Longing and Loss

The Flood Tablet from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* presents a Babylonian version of the global deluge.

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH is an ancient Mesopotamian literary work that tells a fantastic story of King Gilgamesh's failed quest for immortality. Set in early dynastic Uruk (c. 2600 BCE), *Gilgamesh* reentered the literary world in 1872, when George Smith—an Assyriologist at the British Museum—first translated a line of the poem from a cuneiform tablet that had recently been excavated from the great library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh.

The anonymous work is named for its main character, King Gilgamesh, who some believe was an actual historical figure of the third millennium BCE, but was later venerated as a demigod or underworld deity.* Only fragments survive of the earliest, Old Babylonian version, which was produced in the Akkadian language shortly after 2000 BCE but which draws upon three separate and much earlier Sumerian poems featuring Gilgamesh. A more extensive Akkadian version of the composition survives on tablets from first-millennium BCE repositories at Nineveh, Assur, Sultantepe, Babylon, and Uruk. Known as the "standard version," it is usually copied on 12 tablets. Prose retellings of the story were also written in the Hittite and Hurrian languages of Bronze Age Anatolia and Syria. Tablet fragments are now held by many museums, including the British Museum in London and the Sulaymaniyah Museum in Iraq.

Traditional scholarship assumes the literary work originated in oral tradition, like the epic poems of Homer. The canonical example of Homeric poetry led to characterization of the composition as an epic, hence the common name the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Although some disagree and prefer to call it by the more neutral literary term "poem," the traditional title serves to distinguish it from the earlier Sumerian poems featuring Gilgamesh.

The storyline begins in the Sumerian city-state of Uruk, where Gilgamesh befriends Enkidu—a savage created by gods to rival the tyrannical king but tamed in the meantime by a prostitute. Together, they kill the ferocious guardian of the Cedar Forest, Humbaba, bringing back valuable timbers. Gilgamesh resists seduction by the goddess Ishtar, who then seeks revenge by sending the bull of heaven to kill the audacious hero. With Enkidu's help, the bull is killed. The two killings outrage the gods, who decree Enkidu's death. Gilgamesh deeply mourns his friend and sets out on an arduous journey to understand the limits of human mortality and to find the only man with eternal life, Utnapishtim. Realizing he cannot achieve immortality, Gilgamesh returns to Uruk, and the spirit of Enkidu comes to tell him of the state of the dead.

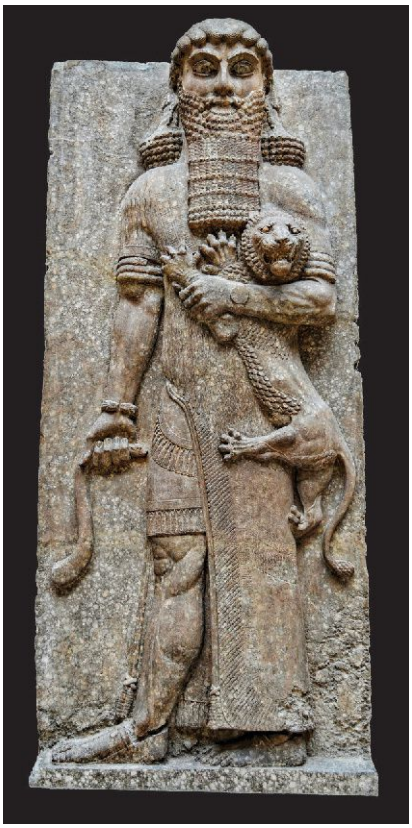
*Tzvi Abusch, "Gilgamesh: Hero, King, and a Striving Man," *Archaeology Odyssey*, July/August 2000.

For biblical studies, *Gilgamesh* offers an intriguing early attestation of several stories and motifs later found in the Bible. Famously, one tablet contains the account of the Flood featuring Utnapishtim as the Babylonian Noah (see left), while Enkidu's creation from the soil parallels the biblical account of the Garden of Eden. The notoriously pessimistic Book of Ecclesiastes (Qohelet) seems to echo *Gilgamesh*'s message regarding the transient nature of life, and both works also contain the rare proverb, "A threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12).*

Since its earliest modern translations, the poem has been celebrated for its enduring relatability. Gilgamesh's struggle for peace and belonging, along with his restlessness, instinctive violence, and fear of death give the story a feel of timelessness. A tale of intimate friendship, loss, and grief, this ancient text appeals to our universal sense of fundamental humanity, even though its protagonist is a two-thirds divine overlord from 4,600 years ago. The many likely representations of Gilgamesh include this eighth-century BCE relief showing the hero grasping a lion and snake.

An unlikely bestseller, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* has been translated into two dozen languages. The recent publications in English include Sophus Helle's *Gilgamesh: A New Translation of the Ancient Epic* (Yale Univ. Press, 2021) and a provoking exploration by literary historian Michael Schmidt, *Gilgamesh: The Life of a Poem* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2019). The authoritative scholarly publication is Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, 2 vols. (Oxford Univ. Press, 2003).—M.D.

*Karel van der Toorn, "Did Ecclesiastes Copy Gilgamesh?" *Bible Review*, February 2000.



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Gilgamesh mastering a lion, in a relief from Khorsabad dated to the late eighth century BCE.

Caption to identify this tablet

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Gilgamesh

^{d}*pap.bíl.ga.mes* (Sumerian) | ^{d}*gi-il-ga-meš* (Akkadian)

d = divine marker | *pap* = "elder" | *bíl.ga* = "fruit," "offshoot" | *mes* = "hero"

Gilgamesh appears in numerous Sumerian poems but is best known from the later, Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where he is presented as a heroic figure and king of the Sumerian city of Uruk in the early third millennium BCE.

While the modern spelling of the name follows an Akkadian pronunciation, the name itself originated from the Sumerian personal name Pabilgames. The literal translation of this original form is "the elder fruit was a hero," meaning "the forebearer was a hero," where the verb "to be" is assumed and read in the past tense, which was the default tense of Sumerian. It likely refers to Gilgamesh's father, since offering praise of the child's father or a particular deity was common in Sumerian and Akkadian. The name is consistently introduced by the symbol for deities (the unpronounced 𒀭), to express Gilgamesh's deified status.

When it was adopted into Akkadian, the Sumerian name dropped the element "pa." Dozens of alternative spellings and pronunciations of the name Gilgamesh exist throughout cuneiform literature, demonstrating the flexibility of the script as well as a scribal tendency to reinterpret the origins and meanings of names.

The exploits of Gilgamesh were frequently depicted in the ancient Near East, and survived in numerous other ancient languages and scripts, including Hurrian, Hittite, Aramaic, and Greek. In modern times, Gilgamesh has appeared in nearly every form of popular media, including comic books, video games, television, and film.

DEFINE INTERVENTION (SEE QUIZ ON P. 61)

Answer: 3

In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Dilmun is the island reserved for Utnapishtim and his wife, who survived the Great Food. At the direction of the god Enki, they had built a boat which protected them from the deluge. After the waters subsided, the gods granted them immortality and placed them on Dilmun, an otherworldly place at the edge of the world, where the sun rises. When Gilgamesh travels to Dilmun, he must fight lions; convince hybrid human-scorpion creatures to let him pass; traverse a long, dark mountain tunnel; and cross the Waters of Death. The journey is not for the faint of heart.

Beyond being a mythical land, Dilmun was also a real civilization, sometimes located on the western shore of the Persian Gulf in the area of modern Bahrain, where archaeologists have found burial mounds (see above) and settlements dating back to the third millennium BCE. Its prosperity and fertility were legendary. Not only was it Utnapishtim's home, but it also appears as the site of creation in other Mesopotamian myths.

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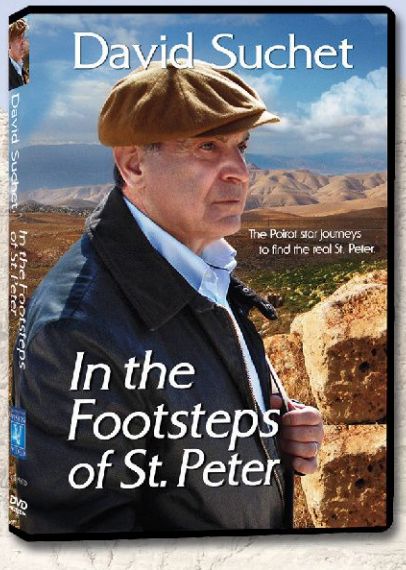

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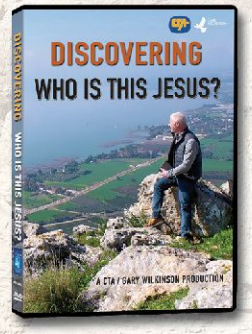

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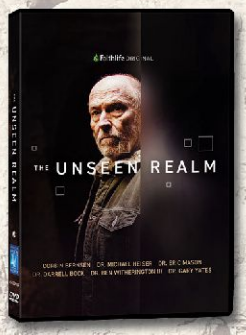

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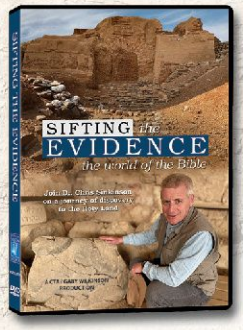

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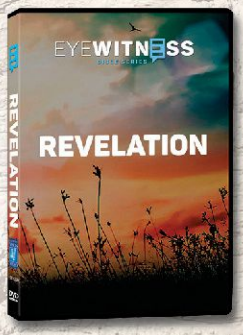

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Ibex

Ibex refers to several species of wild goat from the genus *Capra* that live in the mountainous regions of Europe, Southwest Asia, and North Africa. These include the Nubian ibex (*Capra ibex nubiana*), which was known in ancient Israel, and the West Asian ibex (*Capra aegagrus*), or Persian wild goat, which is the ancestor of the domestic goat. In the southern Levant, the ibex was hunted to near extinction by the early 20th century but has rebounded and is now counted in the thousands throughout the Negev and Judean deserts.

Although male ibexes are easily identified by their large, semicircular, knotty horns and black beards, it is almost impossible to distinguish ibex from domestic goat in the archaeological record since their bones are nearly identical. But across the ancient Near East, these majestic creatures appear in many artistic representations, including this bronze incense burner from southwestern Arabia. Dating to the mid-first millennium BCE, it stands 11 inches tall. Its decoration includes a round disk set within a crescent flanked by two snakes. This religious imagery complements the apotropaic role of the ibex in ancient South Arabia.

The ibex is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Bible with the name *yael* (literally, "to ascend"), which aptly describes the ibex's agility in climbing, though modern Bibles often translate this term rather loosely as "wild goat" or "mountain goat."* In the Book of Job, God explains to Job that he deliberately hides some things from people, saying: "Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?" (39:1). In 1 Samuel 24:2, Saul pursues David to the cliffs at Ein Gedi overlooking the Dead Sea, "in the direction of the Rocks of the Wild Goats," where ibex can again be seen today roaming a wildlife sanctuary. Additionally, Proverbs 5:19 talks about "a graceful doe" (*yaalah*) as a metaphor for a young wife.

Little is known about what role the ibex played in Mesopotamian, ancient Israelite, Jewish, or Christian belief. The ibex is permitted within Jewish dietary law, and it was most likely hunted throughout biblical times, as its skin was occasionally used for parchment. From at least the Middle Ages, Europeans believed small concretions found in the ibex's stomach or intestines, called bezoar stones, were an effective antidote against poison.

Spelled as Yael or Jael, the Hebrew word for ibex also serves as a personal name, the most notable biblical example being the Kenite woman who killed the Canaanite commander Sisera by driving a tent peg through his head (Judges 4–5).

* See Avinoam Danin, "'Do You Know When the Ibexes Give Birth?'" BAR, November/December 1979.

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ERIC CARLSON

"We should have borrowed Jacob's Ladder for this job!"

DANIEL RYS
CAPE CORAL, FLORIDA

Thank you to all those who submitted caption entries for our Winter 2022 cartoon (left), based on Joshua 4:8: "The Israelites did as Joshua commanded. They took up twelve stones out of the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the Lord had told Joshua, carried them over with them to the place where they camped, and laid them down there." We are pleased to congratulate Daniel Rys of Cape Coral, Florida, who wrote the winning caption, and our runners-up:

RUNNERS-UP

"We may need more than gravity to hold these tribes together!"

JIM TALENS
BOYNTON BEACH, FLORIDA

"Forget the milk and honey. Find me some Super Glue!"

CAROL RADFORD
SAINT CLAIR, MISSOURI

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Jenga on the Jordan.

TIM MCGEEHAN
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

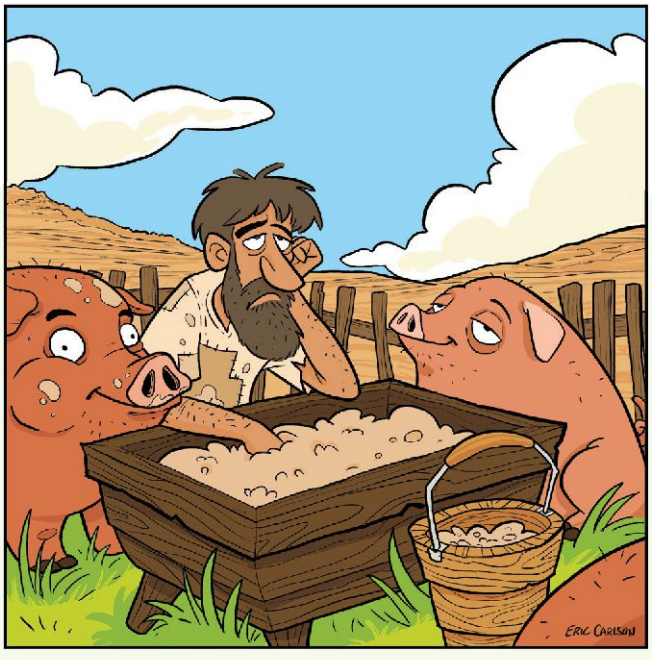
"No, stop! It's not in alphabetical order!"

PAUL NASH
PORT JEFFERSON STATION, NEW YORK

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 the parable of the prodigal son: "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:15–16). Submit it via our website at **biblicalarchaeology.org/captioncontest**.

Please include your name and address. The deadline for entries is August 15, 2023. 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

Luke 15:15–16

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AVAILABLE IN A VARIETY OF
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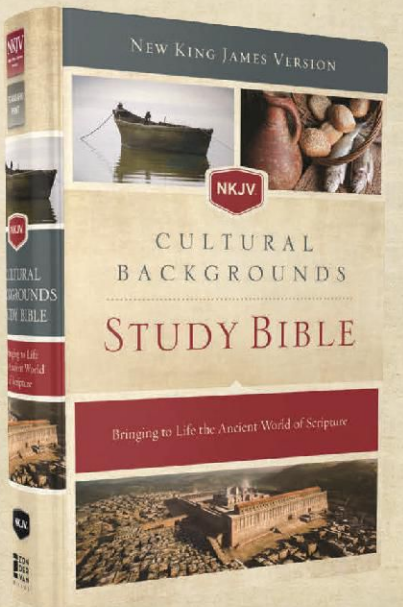

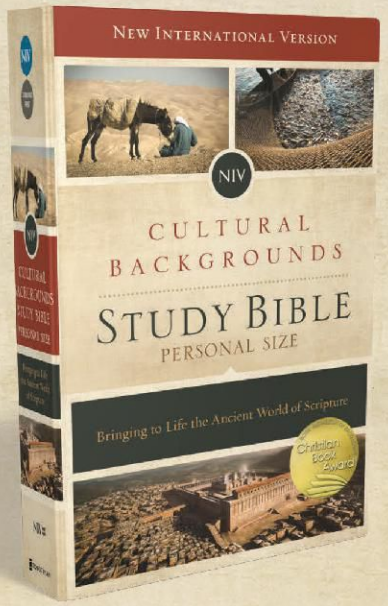

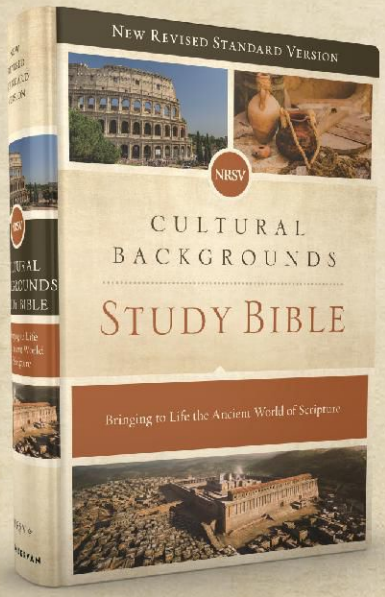

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