

Review: *Lost Civilisations-The Holy Land*, Time Life Inc., Richmond, VA, 1992

Pages: 169

Archaeology Witnessing to the Bible

An enjoyable look into the archaeology and history of the Holy Land which fleshes out much detail of the New Testament, securing it as an historical document and Biblical aide.

Of note are sections on the Dead Sea scrolls of Qumran, also Masada and Herod's other construction projects of the Herodium and Caesarea Maritima.

I) Terrain and Testament: Digging for the Bible (pp. 13-47)

The oldest know Biblical texts are 7thC BC from burial caves of Jerusalem's Valley of Hinnom ("Valley of the Slaughter" per Jeremiah as the place of child sacrifice. It became synonymous with hell). Two small rolled-up Ag scrolls worn as neck amulets were found. These could not be unfurled, till 1983 when a transparent and elastic acrylic emulsion was used as a coating. On one sheet the Tetragrammaton was visible.

In the 1930s, Archaeologist William Albright wrote, "discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition of the value of the Bible as a source of history." [p. 16]

Under Emperor Hadrian, Jerusalem became Aelia Capitolina and was dedicated to Jupiter.

After the Ottomans conquered Jerusalem, monasteries and convents remained as "tiny islands in a hostile sea".

As well as Peter and Paul's heads, Rome's Lateran basilica claimed it possessed: the Tablets of Moses; Ark of the Covenant; Aaron's Rod; a tunic of Mary; hair shirt of John the Baptist; fish and loaves from the feeding of the 5,000; the table of the Last Supper. The chapel of Saint Lawrence close by has the umbilical cord and foreskin of Jesus! [p. 19]

Explorer Edward Robinson arrived in Egypt, 1838. He discovered Hezekiah's tunnel of 1,750ft, 100ft under the surface.

The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) was established by Britain in 1865. In 1867 it was run by Lieutenant Charles Warren, who with the Royal Engineers uncovered Jerusalem's foundations. They used Mg wire as lighting.

Archaeologist William Petrie revolutionised the science in the Holy Land by recognising the value of potsherds since they were impervious to decay unlike wood and fabric.

In Egypt, Petrie catalogued 3M pottery pieces and put them into a chronological framework. At Tell el-Hesi he found 50k across eleven layers of towns.

An Au plaque of Asherah has been discovered at Tell el-Ajjul in Gaza.

A layer of ash dated to 722 BC records Samaria's destruction by the Assyrians.

Petrie discovered the Merneptah stele in Thebes, 1896. It was black granite with 28 lines. One line reads: "Israel is destroyed, its seed is not". Merneptah is said to have reigned c1212BC.

In 1908, archaeologist George Reisner found a mound which was Samaria, founded 9thC BC by King Omri.

"Tell" means "occupied mound" in Arabic.

Sennacherib was repulsed at Jerusalem in 701BC

Britain invaded the Holy Land in 1916, capturing Jerusalem late 1917.

Beth-shan has some type of anthropoid clay sarcophagus. King Saul's body was hung from its walls.

Megiddo is in northern Palestine

ASOR is the American School of Oriental Research. It was formed 1900 by 20 universities. In 1920, 29-year-old William Albright became director.

In the 1930s Briton John Starkey found the true site of Lachish (in 587 BC a Jewish officer wrote to his commander; "May Jehovah cause my lord to hear news of peace, even now, even now").

Starkey was murdered by Muslim bandits in 1938.

William Dever: [a century and a half of exploration "has for all time demolished the notion that the Bible is pure mythology". [p. 37]

St Catherine's was founded in the 6thC AD and houses 3,000 Biblical manuscripts.

Samaria was renamed Sebaste by Herod in the 1stC BC. Most of his monuments were dedicated to Augustus Caesar.

II) Cities of the Promised Land (p. 49-83)

Hazor is 10mi north of the Sea of Galilee. Yigael Yadin found a shrine to Baal Hamman there and thought 40,000 people lived there.

Haganah was the 1930s underground Jewish military force.

Archaeologists use laser theodolites, computer-imaging, and atomic energy for surveying and analysis nowadays.

Neutron activation analysis (NAA) is used on pulverised chips of clay artifacts, causing them to emit gamma-rays depending on the constituent elements. Element composition is then matched to locations known for such clays. Typical elements in Tel Dan vessels include La and Fe, plus eighteen others.

Kathleen Kenyon began excavations at Jericho in 1952. The city had a 30-foot-high defensive tower.

Jerichites made skull objects for worship.

A collection of 350 letters in Akkadian (the Amarna Letters) was discovered at tel-Amarna, religious capital of Pharaoh Akhenaten. Many referenced the "Apiru" bandits.

In 1962, G. E. Mendenhall suggested the Hebrews had been in Canaan all along, but as landless peasants. He formulated the Peasant's Revolt hypothesis to explain the Canaanite Conquest.

A rhyton was a Canaanite stylised drinking cup.

No Philistine writings exist. They are said to have arrived in the eastern Mediterranean in the early 12th C BC. In a battle c1175BC, Ramses III's chronicles says; "the Philistines were made ashes" [p. 69]. However, their arrival signalled the end of Egyptian power in Canaan.

The Philistines may have introduced the *ashlar* squared dress stone.

Ashkelon had 50-foot walls sloping outward to a 75-foot thick base.

Philistine soldiers wore feathered headgear.

III) Jerusalem: The Dream and the Nightmare (pp. 84-108)

The temple mount is said to have hoofprint-shaped hollows in the stone, cut by Muhammad's "barak" steed! [p. 85]

Hefty bribes were required to work in the Middle East during the Ottoman Empire.

From 1909 and 1911, Captain Montague Parker led a rogue expedition in Jerusalem, but was eventually forced to flee for his life.

The old Jebusite fortress on the Ophel had a 44-foot high rampart, 43-feet wide with 55 graduated courses of limestone blocks.

No direct evidence of the First Temple exists.
Jerusalem was ten times the size of Lachish.

The Edomites built Maresha SW of Jerusalem, digging into the soft limestone caves. These also housed sixty pigeon niches with a 100,000-bird capacity.

In 113 BC, Maccabean John Hyrcanus conquered Edom.

The 1980 Ophel dig found 51 clay bullae. Some had “Ahiyahu” (“my brother is God”). One also bears the imprint of scribe Gemaryahu.

Son of Judah’s governor Zurubabel under the Persians, and Joshua, rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

In 445 BC, Nehemiah was serving Artaxerxes and was given permission to rebuild Jerusalem.

In 63 BC, John Hyrcanus II asked Pompey for help, but this led to the Hasmoneans becoming clients of Rome by 37 BC.

Herod the Great was an Edomite and a late convert to Judaism.

Herod's Temple took eleven years: eight for stone block quarrying (2-10T each); three for extension of the original. There were an estimated 18,000 workers.

“The Temple appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was purest white”.

Jerusalem had ~150,000-200,000, with as many as 100,000 extra visitors on the annual feast.

In 1838, a fragmentary arch was discovered on the western wall which was part of a bridge spanning the Tyropoeon Valley.

On the Temple Mount: “It was the custom for one of the priests to stand and to give notice, by sound of trumpet, in the afternoon of the approach, and on the following evening of the close, of every seventh day, announcing to the people the respective hours for ceasing work and for resuming their labours”.

IV) The Treasures of Qumran (pp. 109-117)

A Bedouin boy Muhammad ad Dhib of the Tamireh tribe found seven jars of scrolls in a cave. In another were three leather bundles wrapped in decaying linen. Eventually, eleven caves had 800 documents.

Two Tamireh Bedouins took the scrolls to Bethlehem and dealer Khalil Iskander Shahin (“Kando”), a Syrian Orthodox.

Metropolitan Athanasius Yeshua Samuel agreed to buy all of Kando’s scrolls. Caves V and IV had the most finds.

Samuel contacted Prof. Eleazar Sukenik. In January 1949, he smuggled them to New York.

A 24-foot-long Isaiah Scroll was dated 100 BC.

Most finds were documented by Catholic scholars.

V) In the Footsteps of Jesus (pp. 118-169)

Jews collect bones of the dead after a year and reinter them in ossuaries.

From skeletons, only 2 of 17 lived to be over 50.

Josephus wrote that crucifixion of 3,600 Jews in AD 66 helped spark the rebellion.

*Excruciatu*s means “out of the cross”.

The 1961 Caesarea Maritima discovery of “Tiberium” and “Pilatus” proves he was a first century governor.

No secular history records Herod’s Massacre of the Innocents.

An ancient caravan road between Damascus and Egypt was only six miles from Nazareth. Nearby was Decapolis, a group of ten Hellenistic cities southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

The Pool of Bethesda is also known as the Sheep Pool. Peter was from Bethsaida

Early Christians used the peacock as a symbol of immortality.

A 1stC AD boat was dug from the slime, encased in polyurethane and floated up.

A cave below Masada's southern wall contains 25 skeletons who chose death over slavery. 960 Zealots held out for several months before suiciding.

Bar-Kokhba revolted in AD 132; Hadrian put him down by killing 500,000 Jews.

Pontius Pilate was Judean procurator from AD 26-36 in office, when he was recalled for murdering a group of Samaritans. He lived at Caesarea Maritima, but for Passover moved to Herod's palace of the Antonia Fortress as the population doubled.

In 1842, German pastor Otto Thenius favoured a hill 150 yards north the Jerusalem's walls because of two caves having a skull-like appearance. This was made famous by General Charles Gordon.

Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612 BC, who went on to defeat the Egyptians.

Syria ruled Egypt from 198 BC when the Seleucids beat Ptolemy's heirs. In 167 BC, Syrian Antiochus IV banned Judaism in favour of Greek gods. Judah Maccabee revolted and recaptured the Temple. By 142 BC they had won independence.

In 63 BC, General Pompey ruled Judea as a client state, then in 40 BC, Rome made Herod the Great King.