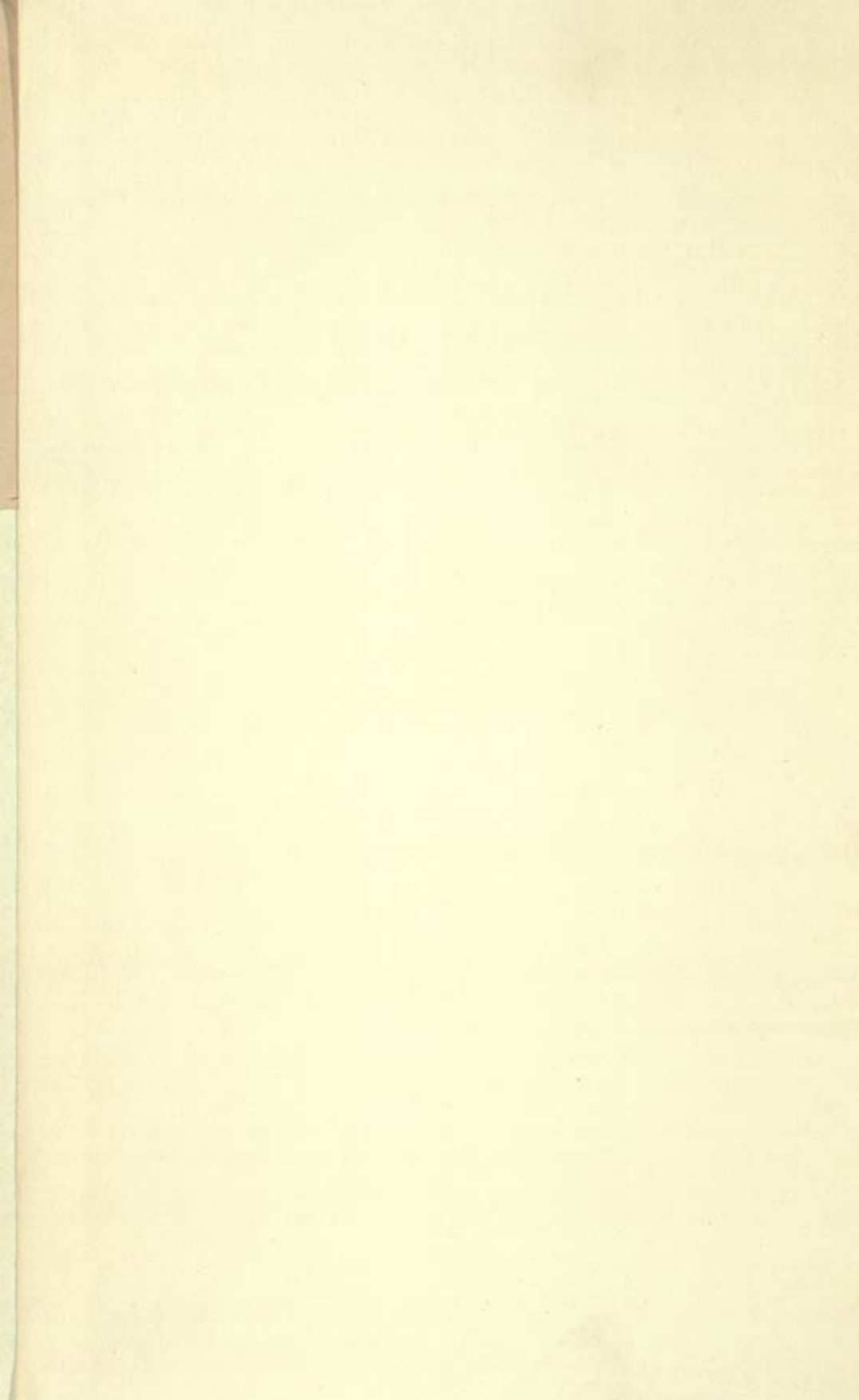


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Ancient Cultures

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Anton Jirku

Translated by Ann E. Keep



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Weidenfeld and Nicolson
5 Winsley Street London W1

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English translation © 1967 by George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd
First published in Germany under the title *Die Welt der Bibel*

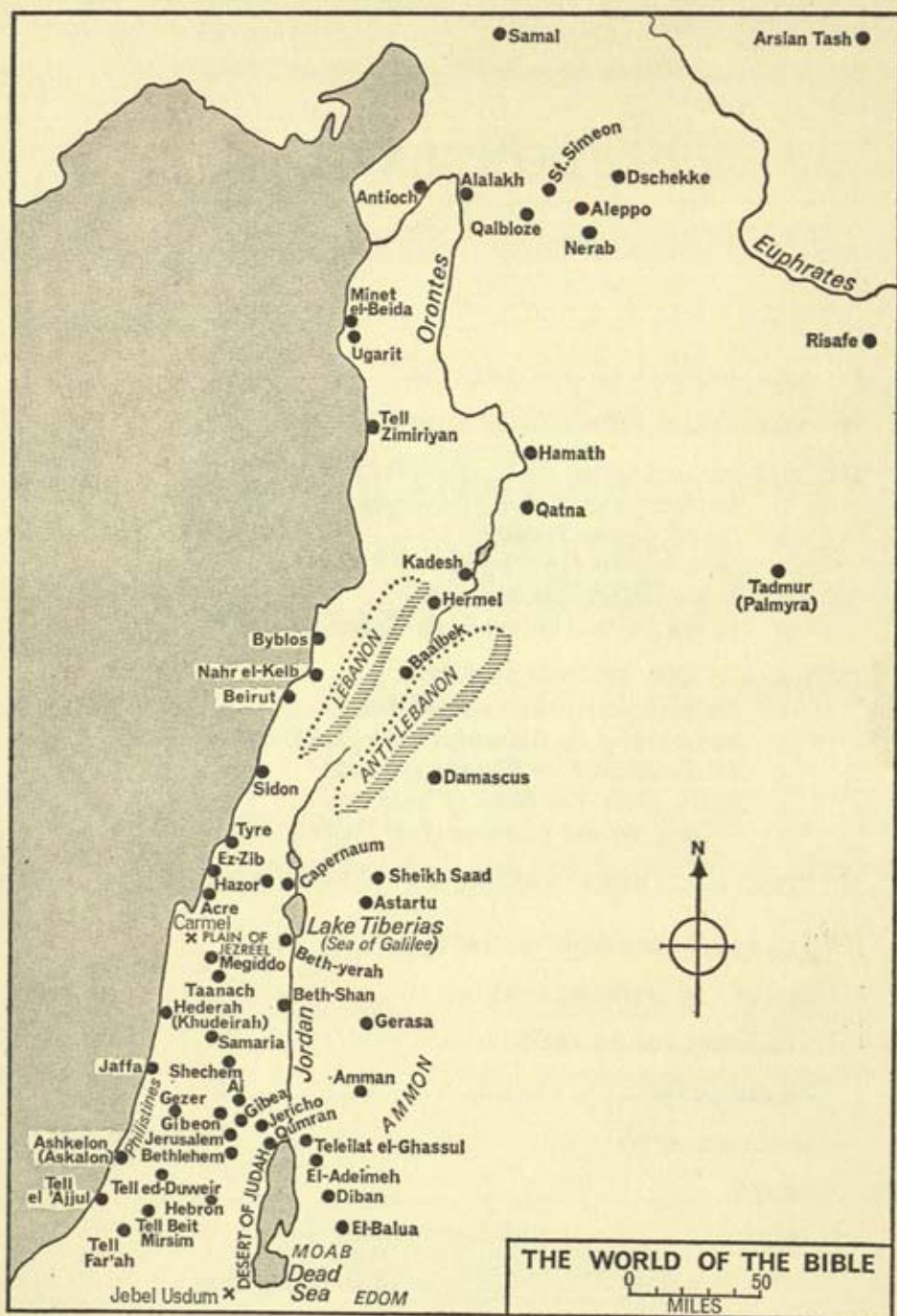
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by Ebenezer Baylis and Son Limited
The Trinity Press, Worcester, and London

Received from Mrs. Melvin Kam Mandelkern. Delhi - 27/6/68 - for Bh 45/- only.

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THE LAND AND ITS SETTING

Let us begin our exploration of Palestine-Syria in ancient times by ascending to the wooded summit of Mt Carmel. At our feet the blue Mediterranean stretches out to the horizon; the sandy shore is a gleaming white, and the land behind a shimmering green. The charms of the seaward view are rivalled by the beauty of the landscape. Spring is here. The whole countryside is dotted with anemone and cyclamen in full bloom; the river-banks are hidden by the rose-tinted blossoms of the oleander. The Bible, in the Song of Solomon, had already celebrated the beauties of this country in spring:

For, lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle-dove
is heard in our land.
The fig-tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance. (Solomon 2: 12-13)

A vast plain confronts us, the Plain of Jezreel, as it is called in the Bible after an ancient princely residence (see plate 1). But to the north and south it is flanked by mountainous terrain as far as the eye can see, an endless succession of hills planted with olive- or fig-trees, and, in the valleys between, Arab settlements with their typical square houses. Continuing on our way eastwards, we finally come in sight of the city to which pilgrims have directed their steps for thousands of years - Jerusalem. And we hear the words of the psalmist, who describes compellingly the emotions of a pilgrim in bygone times:

I was glad when they said to me:
'Let us go to the House of the Lord!'

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Our feet have been standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem, built as a city
which is bound firmly together,
To which the tribes go up. (Psalm 122: 1 ff.)

The magic of this spot is irresistible; even today it strikes a chord in the hearts of followers of three of the world's great religions.

To the east of Jerusalem lies desert country, across which we must pass to reach Jericho. For hours on end we must ride through barren wastes. But suddenly the horses' pace grows livelier, and the oasis of Ain Qilt reveals itself before our eyes – a paradise nourished by a spring, surrounded by desert. And there lies Jericho, 'the oldest city in the world', as we now know. It owes its origin to a spring which Biblical tradition links with a miracle performed by the prophet Elijah (II Kings 2: 19 ff.).

Our route now takes us northwards, along the river Jordan. The scenery changes completely. The valley is bordered by limestone hills of bizarre shape, the effect of erosion; Arab shepherds wander along with their flocks. The climax of this journey is reached when we arrive at the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee), sacred for its association with the person of Christ; on its shores the Biblical city of Capernaum has risen again, as a result of the excavations carried out there (see plates 2 and 3).

Syria, further to the north, astonishes us by its relative abundance of water. Into the rivers Leontes and Orontes flow a large number of streams which rise amidst the peaks of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon; and this wealth of water accounts for Syria's greater prosperity, as evidenced by the great cities of Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo. What a magnificent sight the shore presents here! We find the same splendid flora as in Palestine. It is of course short-lived, for in early summer the hot east wind begins to blow across the land. The dry season lasts for four months. Within twenty-four hours the vegetation withers and the swarms of insects disappear. In the words of Isaiah (40: 7):

The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it.

The landscape of Palestine-Syria is thus a varied one. It has another characteristic feature: time and again we come across hills, both large and small, which are not of natural origin, and for this reason are sharply distinguished by the native Arabs, who refer to them as *tells*,

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whereas the word for a natural mountain is *jebel*. These tells are ancient occupied mounds, formed over the centuries by one settlement being built on top of another, until they gradually came to assume their present shape. From the late nineteenth century onwards, with the ever-growing number of excavations that have been undertaken, these tells have begun to yield their secrets: remains of buildings, inscriptions, images of deities, cult objects, and much else besides.

One of the first of these sites to be unearthed was the ancient city of Gezer, which according to the Biblical account was presented to King Solomon as a gift by his Egyptian father-in-law. The next were Taanach and Megiddo, mentioned in the Song of Deborah, which tells of the battle fought against the Canaanite kings (Judges 5: 19):

The kings came, they fought;
then fought the kings of Canaan
at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo.

Before us there rose again the ancient city of Jericho, whose walls, legend has it, were so strong that they could be taken only with the aid of supernatural force. We have set eyes upon King Ahab's palace at Samaria; and the ancient city of Shechem, where the first king of Israel made his appearance, has been wrested from the rubble that buried it for thousands of years. What glories of ancient Canaanite civilization have been revealed in Syria, at the sites of such ancient cities as Byblos, Ugarit and Alalakh!

No area can show better than Palestine-Syria the great influence which geographical setting has upon a country's history and cultural development. This strip of land along the Mediterranean shore, sixty-three miles wide and 313 miles long, is the only land bridge between three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. Through Palestine ran the trade-routes that linked Egypt with Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Along this route came foreign conquerors as well as merchants; both brought into Palestine-Syria new religious practices and a succession of cultural innovations. And thus there developed here a hybrid civilization, vigorous and varied, constantly presenting new aspects, and growing up in continual contact with the great civilizations of the ancient world: Egypt, Babylonia, Mycenaean Crete and the Hittite Empire.

Palestine-Syria did not itself produce an outstanding original culture. Its significance lay elsewhere. Its great mission was to bring into being for the first time in world history a belief in a spiritual, moral and

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supernatural God ; to formulate, through the mouths of the great Old Testament prophets, a teaching which finally led to Christianity, and made Jerusalem what it remains to this very day – one of the principal centres of the Christian world.

And we may mention at this point yet another great intellectual achievement originating in Palestine–Syria : the creation of the alphabet that was destined to become the basis of all the systems of writing in use among all the more highly developed European peoples.

II

THE FIRST THREE MILLENNIA

The earliest epochs of human history in Palestine-Syria, reckoned in thousands of years, took a course similar to that in Europe. Warmer periods were followed by colder ones, the difference being that pluvial periods took the place of glacial ones. Since objects used in everyday life as well as weapons were still made of stone, this era in the history of the country is referred to as the Stone Age. As in Europe, it is divided into a Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Age, and these periods may be further sub-divided. There is no doubt that there were remarkable affinities between the Stone Age in Europe and that in Palestine-Syria, especially during the earliest period; this is shown by the great similarity between the objects and implements used in everyday life in both cultures. It is to this era that we may date the rock-drawings at Kilwa (plate 4), in south-eastern Palestine, which bear a closer resemblance to those in Africa than to the better-known ones in Spain. Rock-drawings of this kind have also been found quite recently in the Sinai Peninsula.

A large number of the settlements in Palestine-Syria can be traced back to the Stone Age. Where they were built above ground, their existence is attested by stone implements, such as are to be found throughout the country; everything else has been destroyed by the ravages of time. A better insight into the lives of the people who inhabited this area during the Stone Age is, however, provided by the caves hollowed out in the soft limestone rock by the action of water. These caves were adapted to serve as dwellings from the earliest times; they occur most frequently in the region of Mt Carmel and around the Sea of Tiberias, and are sometimes as much as 100 feet deep. As in the case of the inhabited mounds, which are more recent, it is possible to distinguish various strata of settlement, each layer containing typical domestic objects and implements. From these we can see that the earliest inhabitants of the region sewed their clothing with bone needles, hunted and fished with bone arrow-heads and fish-hooks, and produced awls

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of the same material. Their weapons, hand-held axe-blades, knives and sickles were chipped from stone, and in particular from flint. Stone Age man used to adorn his dead before burial, indicating that he had some conception of a world in the beyond.

The superimposed strata of remains of succeeding settlements in the cave dwellings on Mt Carmel show that during the Stone Age Palestine-Syria was already being constantly invaded by new peoples, about whom we know only what can be learned from finds of skulls and bones.

The fifth and fourth millennia BC constitute the Megalithic Stone Age culture, distinguished by constructions consisting of stone slabs. These may be classified as follows: *dolmens*, sepulchral monuments consisting of a square chamber enclosed by four or five slabs; *menhirs*, upright stones which no doubt served a religious purpose, and according to later Old Testament belief were thought to be the abodes of deities; *cromlechs*, stone circles which were probably intended to mark out the area sacred to the deity. The menhirs and cromlechs later also found their way into the religious concepts of the Canaanites and Israelites.

At the beginning of the fifth millennium BC, and perhaps even earlier, as is indicated by the most recent radio-carbon analyses, a fundamental and comprehensive change took place, probably due to the immigration of new peoples. Men no longer made their home in caves, but lived in houses built of stone. The best evidence yet found of the culture of that period is the settlement of Jericho in the Jordan valley, justly called 'the oldest city in the world'. The very generous spring situated near the city was a natural inducement for a large settlement to be founded here; subsequently, in the Israelite period, the legend arose that what had formerly been a bitter source was made drinkable as a result of a miracle by the prophet Elisha (II Kings 2: 19 ff.). The first buildings were circular, but they soon gave way to square ones (plate 7).

We do not have to depend solely upon foundations that have been unearthed to obtain an idea of the appearance of these circular buildings. A small model of such a round structure was discovered in the course of excavations, which gives us a picture of the way people lived in this 'oldest city in the world'. It is 3 ft. 3 in. high and 2 ft. 6 in. wide, and has an upper floor supported by a column. What sort of men were these, whose houses now reappear before us? And what language did they speak? So far these problems are almost completely unsolved,

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though gradual progress is being made in filling in the picture of their culture and religious beliefs.

This model of a circular structure was not the only surprise find in this excavation. In the same settlement were discovered human figures, fashioned in clay and dried in the sun: two groups of three persons, man, woman and child. The torsos of these figures are badly damaged, but fortunately the heads have been preserved. These heads, $6\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, are pressed flat; hair and beard are suggested by lines of paint; the eyes are inlaid with shells. An important question arises: are these profane figures, or is there a religious meaning to this triad of father, mother and child? Are these deities who were the object of veneration in the ancient temple of Jericho, which was likewise unearched in these excavations? It is not yet possible to give an unequivocal answer to this question (plate 6).

This unique find was not, however, to remain the only one. In 1953 the British archaeologist K. Kenyon discovered, in the same settlement of Jericho, seven human skulls; the fleshy parts had been removed, and faces modelled on them in plaster, which showed all the characteristic facial features. Before modelling, the skulls were filled with earth and then sealed with plaster around the neck. In the case of these heads, too, eyes are suggested by shells; in six out of the seven skulls these shells were cut vertically in the centre. What is the significance of this practice of modelling the heads of the dead? Is it connected with a belief in immortality? Was it intended to assure man of an individual existence in the world beyond? Some six thousand years have passed since these skulls were tampered with in an effort to preserve their external human appearance; since then they have remained unaltered – and are thus among the most ancient works of art known.

During the first half of the fourth millennium BC there must have been a movement of foreign peoples into Palestine–Syria. At various sites where excavations have been carried out there are vestiges of a new type of culture, clearly different from that of Stone Age Jericho. The most important known settlement of this period is that of Teleilat el-Ghassul (which means ‘the hillocks of the *ghassul* plant’), some $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-east of Jericho. The Pontifical Bible Institute in Rome began work on these inhabited mounds in 1929. Since they were so insignificant, all the more importance attaches to the discoveries brought to light there, which included not only stone and metal artefacts but also, on the

interior walls of houses, murals which are unique in the art history of the region. Their symbolism is full of mystery. On the wall of one house is a huge jagged star, painted in black, white and red, 6 ft. in diameter. We can only speculate as to the ideas associated with this picture when it was painted five thousand years ago. It is hardly likely to have been a profane decoration, indeed there is no doubt whatsoever that both this picture and those to be mentioned presently had a religious meaning. This star may well portray the sun; it may also of course have represented a star. Both cults always played a major part in this area.

Besides this star, the murals at Teleilat el-Ghassul yielded grotesque heads with huge eyes and plaited hair. One will probably not go far wrong in assuming that these are demons. They were painted on houses so that they might be exorcized – i.e., warded off (plate 9).

The wall of one house bears a black bird – the only painting of its kind in Palestine-Syria from this period, and we must undoubtedly connect this symbol too with the belief in demons. It may have been the earliest representation of the 'bird of the dead' which many primitive peoples believe flies off with a man's soul after death.

The most interesting painting at Teleilat el-Ghassul is, however, a composite picture (19½ ft. wide and 5 ft. high) of which unfortunately only the lower part has survived. On the wall of one house, which was coated with clay, we find the following scene: six persons turned towards the left, the first two with larger feet, on which we can make out shoes – dark shoes with white laces. These two pairs of feet rest upon footstools, and one has the impression that the two persons are seated. Opposite them, and turned towards them, is the figure of an adult, and behind him a star. How are we to interpret this scene? A seated royal couple with their four children behind them? And opposite them a priest performing some religious rite? (See plate 8).

Paintings of this kind naturally also tell us a good deal about cultural history. If the people of this area painted heads of demons on the walls of their homes, they no doubt also provided them with certain features similar to their own. For all its stylization, the strange coiffure – long plaits hanging down, and a long pointed beard – may tell us something about the hairdress worn at that time. And what could have induced the man who painted the star to place on the head of one demon a two-cornered hat, unless this were the headgear usually worn in the middle of the fourth millennium? One figure of which only fragments

have survived is apparently wearing a gaily-striped costume with sleeves.

Where was the original home of these people, who today astonish us with the curious paintings they left behind on the walls of their houses? Some indication may be given by further finds at Teleilat el-Ghassul. An important discovery was made in the cemetery of the Teleilat el-Ghassul people, which was situated close by, at Adeimeh. The burial was of the characteristic type: a stone cist (a square pit dug into the ground and lined with stones) with a hearth, and earth heaped on top — such as has long been familiar to students of European prehistory. This is definitely a Megalithic culture and the only problem that remains is whether these stone cists are an earlier form of burial than the so-called dolmens, consisting of several slabs placed together, which we have already mentioned.

If the Megalithic inhabitants of Teleilat el-Ghassul buried their dead in stone cists, a different form of burial was employed during this period in western Palestine, at Hederah and elsewhere. Here were found clay house urns, parts of which were painted (plate 10). They vary in height from 6 to 20 in. House urns of this kind, in which the bones or ashes of the dead were placed, naturally reproduce the types of dwelling in which the men who made them lived. Since this type is not native to other parts of Palestine-Syria, and since on the other hand we know of such house urns from Rumania and Moravia, there is no doubt that the artisans who produced them came to this area from across the Mediterranean. This is the first time that we can establish such an invasion of Palestine-Syria from that direction. Later, in the middle of the second millennium BC, the peoples of Mycenaean Crete made similar attempts, the most successful being that of the Philistines. Further invasions during the time of the Roman Empire were followed by those of the Crusades. But none of these Mediterranean invaders managed to secure a firm footing in the region. Each time the native peoples eventually succeeded in overcoming their conquerors.

Teleilat el-Ghassul in the Jordan valley and Hederah on the Mediterranean coast were not the only settlements of this era. Others included Jericho, Megiddo, Beth-Shan and Byblos, as well as some thirty smaller places.

The end of the fourth millennium and the beginning of the third is a significant turning-point in the history of Palestine-Syria. For it is now

that the first Egyptian and Babylonian literary sources appear, while excavations have made it possible to trace the emergence of numerous new city-kingdoms, some larger than others. Frequently the historical canvas must be pieced together from small finds or brief accounts. Thus Byblos has yielded a jug on which is inscribed the name of the Egyptian pharaoh Khasekhem (*c.* 2700 BC). The Egyptian king Sahure (*c.* 2600 BC) states that he brought forty ship-loads of cedar-wood from Syria; and from the era of this same Egyptian ruler we have a drawing of prisoners being deported from this region. Another picture of this period represents one of the cities of Palestine-Syria. Several Egyptian kings of the same era refer to the inhabitants of Palestine-Syria as Mantu and Fanakhu (from which the later name Phoenicians may be derived). Pharaoh Pepi I, who ruled *c.* 2400 BC, imported grapes and figs from Palestine-Syria and mentioned the country's first Semitic inhabitants. It is now, too, that Egyptian inscriptions for the first time record a certain type of vessel, the so-called 'Byblos vessel'. The model of such a ship has been discovered in excavations at Byblos.

Later, however, rulers from Babylonia appeared in the northern part of the region. Sargon I conquered the area of the Amanus mountains; his grandson Naram-sin gives an account of a lengthy campaign towards the west; Gudea of Lagash obtained timber from the Amanus mountains some time around 2000 BC. As we see, all along the line battle had been joined for Palestine-Syria, which afforded the only land link between Africa and Asia. It was a struggle that was to exercise a continual influence upon the fate of the city-kingdoms that came into being in the area.

We have obtained a great deal of information on the earliest history of these city-kingdoms from excavations carried out during the last few decades. Although no native inscriptions have been found in these stratified deposits, evidence is provided by domestic implements, religious cult objects, and especially ceramic ware comprising various types of pots and bowls.

About one hundred settlements have so far been established for the third millennium BC as a result of archaeological discoveries. Let us now cast a glance at the most important of them. In the south mention must be made of Jerusalem, which was probably founded at this time. And Jericho, too, boasted an extensive settlement in the third millennium. The city was surrounded by seven walls, while numerous burial sites testify to the presence of a relatively large population. At the end of the

third millennium the city was destroyed, but was rebuilt shortly afterwards; it may have been then that it was given its name, which means 'moon god'.

A vivid picture of one such settlement at the beginning of the third millennium is given by the excavations carried out by Marquet-Krause at Ai, north of Jerusalem. It included a huge palace, in the main hall of which the bases of columns may still be seen. And a large temple with several chambers, containing the superstructure of an altar, was also brought to light. An incense altar discovered at the very same spot shows that burnt offerings were made in this sanctuary. The dead were buried in natural or artificial caves, the bodies being interred either in corners or in cavities along the side walls (plate 11).

In the Jordan valley north of Jericho lay Beth-Shan, and further to the north, at the southern end of the Sea of Tiberias, Beth-yerah ('moon's house'), which developed into an extensive settlement. In the large plain east of the modern city of Haifa stood the massive fortresses of Megiddo and Taanach.

In Syria there were more extensive settlements at Byblos, Ugarit, Hamath and Alalakh. When these places were excavated evidence was found of destruction at the close of the third millennium.

As far as can be seen, these settlements were not the capitals of large states; they were no more than the centres of city-kingdoms, some smaller than others, which varied in power according to circumstances but held sway over a relatively limited area. The formation of larger states seems to have come about as late as the first millennium BC.

III

THE FLOWERING OF CANAANITE CULTURE

1 *The Struggle of the Great Powers for Palestine-Syria*

During the latter half of the third millennium BC a vast wave of Semitic peoples, whom we call the Canaanites, poured into Palestine-Syria. They also include to some extent the people of Israel. The political consequence was that in the second millennium the city-kingdoms became more numerous than they had been before, as the archaeological evidence testifies. Although these cities were destroyed by fresh waves of invaders, in most cases new cities rose upon their ruins. The existence close at hand of springs, hewn-out cisterns and building material facilitated this rebuilding work.

At the beginning of the second millennium we still lack native literary sources, and are entirely dependent on foreign documents. There is a charming Egyptian tale describing the flight of the Egyptian Sinuhe to Palestine-Syria. Sinuhe was an Egyptian nobleman who left, for reasons that are none too clear, when there was a change of ruler. He spent several decades of his life in Palestine-Syria and returned to Egypt as an elderly man. 'One foreign country gave me to another,' he says, alluding to the large number of city-kingdoms in the area. He goes on: 'Figs and grapes were abundant and the land had more wine than water; it was rich in honey and oil, and its trees were laden with fruit; it had barley and wheat and countless cattle.' Thus already at that time it was 'a land of milk and honey', as it was to the Israelites when they entered the country half a millennium later. Sinuhe finally becomes the son-in-law of a native prince and as such wins a duel against an enemy warrior, described in a manner that recalls the fight between David and the Philistine Goliath.

When the native prince says to Sinuhe: 'You shall do well with me,

and you shall hear the speech of Egypt', this is not just poetic licence. There is information from various sources to show that at that time the Egyptians succeeded in winning a foothold in Palestine-Syria. The French excavations at Qatna have yielded a sphinx bearing an Egyptian inscription of Princess Ita, a daughter of the Egyptian king Amenemhat II (1935-1903 BC). And not long afterwards the Egyptian king Sesostri III relates that he conquered the Palestinian city of Shechem. Other documents illustrating the relationship that existed between Egypt and Palestine-Syria at that time are the so-called 'execration texts'. These are formulae in the Egyptian language cursing Egypt's enemies; they are to be found inside bowls, or on clay objects representing members of hostile peoples. The 'execration texts' against Palestine-Syria mention several places which we also encounter repeatedly in later documents: for example, Byblos, Shechem and Ashkelon (plate 19).

From this period may also originate the cylinder seal belonging to Atanah-ili which was found at Taanach. This object provides testimony to the hybrid culture that was now developing in Palestine-Syria. For although the name of the owner appears in Babylonian cuneiform script, the sign for 'life' is placed next to it in Egyptian hieroglyphs. An object of this kind can have been produced neither in Babylon nor in Egypt, but only in Palestine-Syria.

Probably at the same time as Sinuhe was leading his life of adventure in Palestine-Syria, this region was experiencing a major political convulsion. The first information about it came from Egyptian documents; and this was later supplemented and clarified by archaeological research in Palestine-Syria itself. In approximately 1700 BC Egypt was conquered by a foreign people who came from this region. Manetho, the Greek historian, calls them Hyksos; today we know that this name is derived from the Egyptian term 'ruler of foreign lands'. Hyksos rule in Egypt lasted for more than a hundred years. We do not know where this people came from; some of their leaders' names were Semitic, others non-Semitic. If the Hyksos were able to hold sway over Egypt for more than a century, it is clear that they must have been firmly established in the country from which they launched their invasion of Egypt. On the basis of excavation work it can be established that in about 1750 BC many cities in Palestine-Syria were destroyed, that from then onwards jugs and pots are of new ceramic types, and that for a long time there-

after the entire country was literally swamped by the so-called Hyksos scarabs, which usually have an engraved spiral design. This is incontrovertible evidence of the fact that the Hyksos also usurped dominion over most of the Palestinian city-kingdoms, and used the area as a base for their invasion of Egypt. The fertile Nile valley may have been a great attraction for those coming from the much poorer lands of Palestine-Syria.

Just over one hundred years later Egypt recovered. Ahmose, the first king of the Eighteenth Dynasty, captured Avaris, the Hyksos capital in the Nile delta, and then advanced victoriously to southern Palestine. It was not, however, only the Egyptian drive for freedom that caused Hyksos rule to collapse. Literary as well as archaeological evidence shows that, simultaneously with the Egyptian attack on the Hyksos, fresh waves of peoples, including the Habiru Hebrews, entered Palestine-Syria from the north-east. The Hyksos did not, however, disappear entirely from the region, for in Egyptian inscriptions they are frequently mentioned as settled there, even after their expulsion from Egypt – a distinction being drawn between them and the 'princes of Palestine'. The destruction wrought by the Hyksos in Egypt must have been considerable, for even a hundred years later the Egyptian king Thutmose III refers to the work of reconstruction that their rule necessitated.

The Egyptians did not halt their action at the borders of Palestine. Thutmose I (1530-1501) went on to conquer all the territory as far as the Euphrates. The chroniclers of the Egyptian pharaoh were amazed by much that they had to record about the lands that had been taken – not least 'the river which flows backwards', by which they meant the Euphrates, which takes its course in the reverse direction to the Nile. From now onwards these annals often mention elephant hunts organized by the Egyptian rulers in the conquered territory. Thus the material used for the fine ivory carvings discussed below came from Palestine-Syria. There must have been a large number of elephants in the region at this time, as is conclusively shown by the 'elephant cemeteries' still found on occasion. The country in many ways captured the imagination of its conquerors, who liked to refer to it in their inscriptions as 'the land of god'.

At the same time as the warriors of King Thutmose I were conquering Palestine-Syria, Mursilis I, king of the Hittites, was recording his seizure of the Syrian city of Aleppo. One undoubted connection between these two events is that both these expeditions were linked with the struggle

for control of the trade-route between Africa and Asia. In any case, Egyptians and Hittites were enemies from that time onwards, and the day was not long distant when serious conflicts would break out between the two nations.

The Egyptian rule established in Palestine-Syria by Thutmose I does not appear to have lasted for long. In the twenty-third year of his reign Thutmose III (1501-1447) was obliged to set out in an effort to conquer it anew. In 1478 BC he took the city of Gaza and moved up the coast towards the Carmel mountain. We have a dramatic account of his officers describing various routes across the mountains and the king deciding to take the most dangerous of them.

On the Orontes, not far from the ancient city of Megiddo, situated on the northern slope of the Carmel mountain, a great coalition of the city-kings of Palestine-Syria came into being, led by the king of Kadesh. One Egyptian account says that there were three hundred and thirty enemy princes facing the pharaoh here. Thutmose III won a complete victory and obtained great booty. The Egyptian report notes ironically that the enemy princes had to ride home on donkeys, since the Egyptian king had taken their horses. On the city wall of Megiddo was inscribed: 'Thutmose is victor over the Asiatics', and another Egyptian inscription reads: 'The conquest of Megiddo means the conquest of a thousand cities.' The brothers and children of the slain Canaanite princes were taken back to Egypt by Thutmose III. Although they may have been regarded as hostages, some of them must certainly have obtained good positions: one thinks automatically of the story of Joseph.

On sixteen other occasions Thutmose III had to march into Palestine-Syria in order to maintain Egyptian rule there. He immortalized his conquest of the region on huge monuments at Karnak in Upper Egypt. On the walls of one temple are representations of several hundred enemy princes, all of them rendered in an identical fashion: each has, on the upper part of his body, a shield recording the name of one of the conquered Palestinian cities.

Even under the two immediate successors of Thutmose III, the pharaohs Thutmose IV and Amenophis II, tranquillity was not restored to the area; both kings have recorded that they undertook campaigns there in order to re-assert their authority. At the same time, however, another Hittite king, Tudhaliash II, appeared once more in the northern part of the country and captured the city of Aleppo.

2 *The El-Amarna Period*

If Egyptian domination in Palestine-Syria had already begun to weaken under the immediate successors of Thutmosis III, the situation deteriorated still further under Amenophis III and IV, who reigned from 1411 to 1358. These two kings did not appear there in person, as their predecessors had done. Instead they relied on mercenaries from Nubia and the Aegean islands to uphold their rule there, which was frequently only nominal. Amenophis IV, the more recent of these two kings, was anything but bellicose. He indulged in religious speculation, abolished the polytheistic pantheon, and exalted the sun as the one and only god of Egypt. In place of El-Amarna, as it is called today, he founded a new capital and himself assumed a name connected with the new sun cult. In a beautiful hymn he praised the sun as the creator of all life. Curiously enough, this Hymn to the Aton by Amenophis IV bears such striking resemblances to Psalm 104 in the Bible that one cannot reject out of hand the idea that there may have been some connection between the two. Let us first arrange the two psalms side by side according to their content.

Psalm 104

1. Introduction
2. Creation of the world
3. Blessing of the waters
4. Night
5. Day
6. Living beings and their food
7. Conclusion

Hymn of Amenophis IV

1. Introduction
2. Night
3. Day
4. Living beings and their food
5. Blessing of the waters
6. Creation of the world
7. Conclusion

As this shows, the two psalms have the same content, namely the creation of the world by a deity: their theme is identical. Let us now compare one of these parallel passages, that relating to Night. In the Biblical psalm it is the God of Israel who is addressed, whereas in Amenophis IV's hymn it is the sun god.

Psalm 104

Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons;
 the sun knows its time for setting.
 Thou makest darkness, and it is night:
 when all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
 The young lions roar after their prey,
 seeking their food from God.

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Hymn to the Aton (Amenophis iv's Hymn)

When thou settest in the western horizon,
the land is in darkness, in the manner of death.
They sleep in a room, with heads wrapped up,
nor sees one eye the other.
All their goods which are under their heads might be stolen,
[but] they would not perceive [it].
Every lion is come forth from his den;
all creeping things, they sting.
Darkness is a shroud, and the earth is in stillness,
for he who made them rests in his horizon.

The Biblical psalm lays emphasis upon the creation of the sun and moon: night is the time for animals to come out of their hiding-places. In Amenophis iv's hymn the sun is the god of creation; here, too, night is described as the time when animals dare to emerge from their lairs. The similarities are striking; and the same impression results from a comparison between the other themes.

The question inevitably arises whether one psalmist borrowed from the other, and if so which. If we were to go by the date of writing, then of course Amenophis iv's hymn would be the earlier. But the time when a document is composed is not decisive in establishing its date, for every document whose age is known may be based upon an earlier one. Of course, in this case one could say that at the time when Amenophis iv composed his psalm the people of Israel did not yet exist; the Biblical psalmist must therefore have borrowed from Amenophis iv. But especially with a psalm by Amenophis iv such a conclusion leads one into difficulties. For the sun cult which he sponsored was abolished shortly after his death, and thus his Hymn to the Aton would likewise have soon fallen into oblivion, to be rediscovered more than three thousand years later. We must therefore look for a different explanation of the parallel. As we shall see below, at the time of Amenophis iv people in Palestine-Syria were already acquainted with Canaanite psalms which bore a very close resemblance to those in the Bible. Did one such Canaanite psalm first serve Amenophis iv as a model, and then, several centuries afterwards, become familiar to the Biblical psalmist, who modified it in his own way?

We would know little about Palestine-Syria during the reigns of Amenophis III and IV were it not for a unique discovery made in the 1880s at Amenophis' new capital dedicated to the sun at El-Amarna. Here were found about three hundred clay tablets in the Babylonian script and language, most of them letters written by the city-kings of Palestine-Syria to the two pharaohs. They illuminate the period for us like a searchlight, bringing it to life and revealing the events, great and small, that concerned people at that time.

There must have been a frequent exchange of letters between these city-kings and the Egyptian pharaohs. The king of Alashiya, a state in northern Syria, writes that he sent an envoy to Egypt every year; the closer to Egypt the individual countries lay, the more frequently their princes corresponded with the pharaohs. These kings are often portrayed on Egyptian monuments, with long hair and moustache.

All these city-kings are lavish with expressions of loyalty and submissiveness towards the pharaohs. As an example of the 'courtly style' which gradually evolved in this correspondence, we may cite the beginning of a letter written to the Egyptian king by the then prince of Beirut:

To the king, my lord, my sun-god, my pantheon, the breath of my life, thus has spoken Ammunira, the prince of Beruta, thy servant and the dust of thy feet. Seven and seven times I fall at the feet of the king, my lord, my sun-god, the breath of my life. I have heard the words of the tablet of the king, my lord, my sun-god, the breath of my life, and great rejoicing has filled the heart of thy servant who is the dust of the feet of the king, my lord, my sun-god, the breath of my life, that the breath of the king, my lord, my sun-god is gone out to his servant and the dust of his feet.

Other city-kings assure the Egyptian king that they fall prone 'on their belly, on their back'. A less exaggerated impression is given by the introductory expression of good wishes in other letters: 'With thee, thy wives, thy children, thy horses, thy chariots, in thy entire land may it go very well.'

These letters reveal a remarkable degree of disunity among all these petty princes. Here, for example, is the prince of Byblos complaining about the land of Amurru: 'Amurru follows wherever there is a mighty ruler.' The same tone can be heard in the letters of the rulers of Amurru. One king of this state is even accused of having sold his father to Egypt. The prince of Byblos takes offence at the fact that the envoy of the king

of Akko (Acre) is accorded more respect in Egypt than his own representative. The island of Tyre complains bitterly that the city of Sidon is blocking its water supplies. Serious accusations are levelled by the prince of Megiddo against the king of Shechem. The Egyptian king is asked to send a force of one hundred men to Megiddo to protect the city from possible attack. But the prince of Shechem has an original way of defending himself. He writes to the king of Egypt: 'When ants are smitten, they do not accept this calmly, but bite the hand of the man who smites them. How shall I then keep my peace in such a situation?' He dares to assert: 'If the king should write for my wife, could I withhold her? If the king should write to me: "Plunge a bronze dagger into thy heart and die!", could I refuse to carry out the command of the king?'

One great cause of concern is common to all the city-kings of Palestine-Syria: the fear of the Habiru who have invaded their country from the north. They are no doubt identical with the Hebrews of the Bible, and we shall have more to say about them in due course. In addition to the Habiru there appear the Hittites, who were soon to hold sway over the whole northern part of Syria. Thus the prince of Alashiya, in northern Syria, warns the Egyptian king to be on his guard against the Hittites. The king of Byblos also reports that they are plundering his fields. The prince of Amurru reproaches the king of Egypt for giving preferential treatment to the Hittite envoys over his own. Only small contingents of troops are requested from the pharaoh by these Palestinian city-kings: twenty, thirty or fifty men. Few of the replies made to all these complaints and accusations have survived. But one letter addressed by the Egyptian king to the prince of Amurru, found at El-Amarna, shows that the former could make his will quite clear: 'If for any reason thou seekest to do evil or place words of evil or hatred in thy heart, then shalt thou and all thy family die from the blows of the king's hatchet.' To the king of Byblos the Egyptian pharaoh has on one occasion no more to say in his letter than: 'protect thyself!'

But as well as political troubles of this kind we also hear of other details relating to the life led by these princes. Thus the king of Alashiya mentions that the 'Hand of Nergal' – Nergal is the Babylonian god of the underworld – is killing the inhabitants of his country, and the king of Ugarit asks for a doctor to be sent. When the king of Egypt celebrates a sacrificial festival, the king of Alashiya has to submit to censure for not having sent his congratulations on the occasion of this ceremony. The

king of Alashiya loses no time in making his apologies and as penance sends one hundred talents of copper. On the whole Alashiya tended to exchange its copper for Egyptian goods. On one occasion an inhabitant of Alashiya dies in Egypt, leaving his wife and children at home, and the prince therefore asks for this man's property to be sent back to his family.

Of particular interest are of course the letters sent to Egypt by Abdu-Heba, then king of Jerusalem (Abdu-Heba means 'servant of the goddess Heba'; the name Jerusalem appears in the letters as Urusalim). But since this man was probably a Hittite immigrant, the first part of his name is likely to have been different. Abdu-Heba, too, makes profuse assurances of his loyalty to the Egyptian pharaoh and says that everything derogatory told about him is libellous. In the letters from the other city-kings a different note is struck; here we read that Abdu-Heba is busily engaged in the conquest of districts south-west of Jerusalem, for which Abdu-Heba excuses himself by saying that this is necessary on account of the struggle against the invading Habiru (plate 13).

One of the most important things about these El-Amarna letters is that they provide evidence of the existence of Canaanite psalms which in many respects bear a striking resemblance to the Biblical ones. Sometimes the language of these letters changes when the writer suddenly addresses the king directly. It has long been known that in such cases the Palestinian-Syrian scribes would adapt fragments of Canaanite psalms to the king of Egypt. A fine example is given in the following letter written by Abdu-Heba:

To the king, my lord, thus speaks
Abdu-Heba, thy servant.
At the two feet of my lord, the king,
seven times and seven times I fall.
What have I done to the king, my lord?
They blame me
before the king, my lord: 'Abdu-Heba
has rebelled against his king, his lord.'

At this point there is a change in the style of the letter, which is otherwise rather dry:

Behold, it was not my father
and not my mother who set me
in this place.

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The mighty hand of the king
brought me into the house of my father.

The word 'king' need only be replaced by the word 'God' and we have before us a fragment of a Canaanite psalm. The scribe goes on:

Why should I commit transgression against the king, my lord? As long as the king, my lord, lives, I will say to the commissioner of the king, my lord: 'Why do ye favour the Habiru and oppose the King's governors?' And thus I am blamed to the king, my lord, because I say 'The lands of the king, my lord, are being lost to him . . . So let the king look to his land.'

And then the tone of the letter changes once more:

Let me enter into the presence of the king, my lord,
and let me see the two eyes of the king, my lord.

About this last paragraph the same remarks apply as were made above: it is based upon a Canaanite psalm fragment adapted to the king of Egypt. After another mention of the danger which the Hebrews present to the country, the letter concludes with the words: 'To the scribe of the king, my lord: thus Abdu-Heba, thy servant. Present eloquent words to the king, my lord. All the lands of the king, my lord, are lost!'

The Canaanite psalm fragments in this letter from fourteenth-century Jerusalem are, however, not unique. From other cities in Palestine-Syria letters were written to Egyptian kings at this time which strike the same chords amidst a description of everyday events. We may cite, from the El-Amarna letters, the following quotations from Canaanite psalms adapted to the kings of Egypt:

Since thou art father and lord to me
I have directed my countenance to thee.

May the breath of the king not forsake us.

My lord, my god, what more do I seek?
The beautiful countenance of the king, my lord, I seek.

Thou givest me life and death.
I look to thy countenance, for thou art indeed my lord!

When we ascend to heaven,
when we descend to earth,
our head is in thy hands!

I have looked this way, I have looked that way,
but there was no light.
And I have looked at the king, my lord,
and there was light.

The Canaanite psalm fragments reproduced here in the El-Amarna letters open up far-ranging questions as to the extent to which later Old Testament psalms were influenced in their subject-matter and language by the much earlier Canaanite ones. The fact that they were modified in a distinctly monotheistic sense, of course led to the Canaanite model developing into something entirely new. In place of the Canaanite gods came the God of Israel; we need only refer here to the classic instance of Psalm 19, which we shall discuss in detail in another connection.

The decline of Egyptian power in Palestine-Syria which began during the El-Amarna period was short-lived. In about 1350 a new dynasty assumed the reins of government. The third king of this house, Seti I, was an energetic ruler. He made an appearance in Palestine-Syria, where the situation, however, had now changed. In Mursilis II, the Hittite king, the Egyptians were confronted by a dangerous foe. The wars which Seti I waged against the Hittites were indecisive in their results. He finally concluded a treaty with Mursilis II whereby the country was divided into two spheres of influence. The Egyptian zone may have extended as far north as the Lebanon.

The accession to the Egyptian throne of Ramses II (1292-1225) and his extensive activity in Palestine-Syria did not alter the situation. In the Hittite Empire Mutallis (Muwatallis) II had now acceded to power. Together with his Syrian vassals, among them Ugarit, he confronted the Egyptian king, and in 1288 the decisive battle took place near Kadesh on the river Orontes. Although both sides claimed victory, it brought no final solution to the conflict. The northern part of the country remained under Hittite suzerainty and the southern part under that of Egypt. With the passage of time the relations between Egypt and the Hittite Empire seem to have eased. Hattusil III, the second successor of Mutallis, married one of his daughters to Ramses II and even went to Egypt himself for the wedding.

In an inscription of Merneptah (1225-1215), the successor of Ramses II, we find the earliest mention of the people of Israel. After recording that the king had celebrated his victories, it says literally:

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Tehenu is destroyed, Hathi is pacified,
Canaan is plundered unmercifully,
Ashkelon is carried away into captivity,
Gezer is destroyed, Yanoam is destroyed,
Israel's people is diminished, its name is expunged.

It was probably during the first half of the second millennium that Byblos became the scene of the first attempt to create a script indigenous to Palestine-Syria. In 1929, when excavating the ancient city of Byblos, the French scholar M. Dunand discovered a stone stele bearing an inscription in a hitherto unknown writing, which was soon followed by others on stone and bronze tablets. This script consists of approximately seventy-five syllabic signs and is thus not an alphabet in our sense of the word. E. Dhorme, another French scholar, succeeded most ingeniously in deciphering this script (which it is probably best to call Gublitic, after Gubla, the ancient name for Byblos). One inscription tells of the way in which a temple was enlarged: 'The copper . . . I have rolled. With the iron-point I have engraved these objects. Akarenu has engraved a sign on the key of the temple, written his name on it and laid it down, as I was engraving the crown of the altar. This work was carried out by Lilu in honour of his family . . .' (plate 12).

This new script could not, however, gain acceptance in Palestine-Syria, since with its seventy-five different signs it must have been too complicated. In the ensuing period Babylonian script and language remained the principal medium of communication, both internally and externally, in written documents, as is shown by those from El-Amarna, Taanach and Shechem.

However, while the Babylonian cuneiform script and language were in general use, there also developed in the region an alphabetic system of writing from which our own is derived. This script, known as Sinaitic because it was first discovered in the Sinai Peninsula, had been in use in Palestine-Syria from about 1700 BC. So far only eleven documents have been found written in it. This is probably due to the fact that the principal materials used for writing were leather or papyrus, which have not survived due to the prevailing dampness of the local climate. Thus the only Sinaitic inscriptions we have are those written on stone, metal or clay.

The Sinaitic script then evolved, probably during the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries BC, into the so-called Old Semitic script, which

	Sinaitic script (early)	Sinaitic script (late)	Old Semetic script	Phonetic value	Hebrew name	Archaic Greek script	Phonetic value	Greek name
1			K, Δ		Aleph (cattle)		a	Alpha
2			𐤁 𐤁	b	Beth (house)		b	Beta
3			𐤂 𐤂	g	Gimel		g	Gamma
4			𐤃 𐤃	d	Daleth		d	Delta
5			𐤄 𐤄	h	He		e	Epsilon
6			𐤅 𐤅	w	Waw (hook)		u	Upsilon
7			𐤆 𐤆	z	Zayin		z	Zeta
8			𐤇 𐤇	h	Heth		e	Eta
9			𐤈 𐤈	t	Tet		th	Theta
10			𐤉 𐤉	i	Yodh (hand)		i	Iota
11			𐤊 𐤊	k	Kaph (palm)		k	Kappa
12			𐤋 𐤋	l	Lamedh		l	Lamda
13			𐤌 𐤌	m	Mem (water)		m	Mu
14			𐤍 𐤍	n	Nun		n	Nu
15			𐤎 𐤎	s	Samekh		ks	Ksi (Xi)
16			𐤏 𐤏		Ayin (eye)		o	Omicron
17			𐤐 𐤐	p	Pe		p	Pi
18			𐤑 𐤑	s	Sade			
19	8		𐤒 𐤒	k	Qoph	𐤒	k	
20			𐤓 𐤓	r	Resh (head)			Rho
21			𐤔 𐤔	sh	Shin (tooth)		s	Sigma
22			𐤕 𐤕	t	Taw		t	Tau

gave rise to the systems of writing employed by the European peoples. A glance at our table of scripts shows that the individual letters were formed in such a way as to represent an object of which the name began with the letter in question. The letter 'b', for instance, was produced by drawing the square shape of a house, called *bait* in Canaanite (no. 2), and the letter 'r' was formed by drawing a head (in Canaanite: *rosh*, no. 20). If the course of development is not so clear with all the letters, this may be due to the fact that the original meaning of some names is no longer known. If we consider the complicated scripts used by the Egyptians and Babylonians, which contained hundreds of signs, determinatives, etc, it is impossible to appreciate too highly the achievement of the Canaanites, who were the first to use a simple alphabet of twenty-two letters to convey the spoken word.

In the El-Amarna letters frequent mention is made of a city by the name of Ugarit. On one occasion we hear that it was set on fire by the enemy; we are told that all the lands from Byblos to Ugarit had become disloyal to the king of Egypt. For a long time no one knew where this city of Ugarit was situated. The problem was solved by the excavations C. Schaeffer began to carry out on the tell at Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast in 1929. This long-neglected old mound contained the remains of this city, which was to become to students of Palestinian antiquities what Assur and Babylon have been to students of Mesopotamia, and Troy and Bogazköy to students of Anatolia: a focal point, where we find the Canaanite culture of the second millennium displayed in an abundance and variety such as no one had previously dared to hope for.

Already *after* the Old Semitic script had been invented and the sequence of its letters fixed, there developed at Ugarit a cuneiform alphabet of thirty letters modelled upon Babylonian cuneiform. The reason why a special cuneiform alphabet was invented, despite knowledge of the Old Semitic script, and possibly including some elements borrowed from it, may have been that the writing material used was clay, which was easier to obtain than papyrus or leather. The mode of writing was also simpler: letters were impressed on the soft clay with a stylus. The cuneiform alphabet invented at Ugarit did not spread any further afield and fragments written in this script have been found at only a few sites. But it is to these clay documents alone that we owe our first-hand knowledge of the great riches of Canaanite civilization, for which the only other sources are the accounts of foreign writers. The

mass of documents written by the rulers of Ugarit made available to us is sufficient reason for us to begin our account of the great city-kingsdoms of Palestine-Syria during the second millennium BC with this principality.

3 *The Canaanite City-Kingdoms*

Ugarit was a very ancient city. It was already inhabited in the fifth millennium BC, and this settlement forms the foundation of the tell which today bears the name of Ras Shamra. As early as the beginning of the second millennium one can detect strong Aegean influences, which are paralleled by those exerted from Egypt. The city seems to have been destroyed in 1700 and to have remained uninhabited for a century thereafter. The era referred to above as 'the period of the El-Amarna letters' was the golden age of Ugarit as well. It was above all King Niqmadu II, a contemporary of Suppiluliumas (1375-1335), king of the Hittites, who led the capital of his country into an age of great prosperity. Aerial photographs of the site have shown that the city stretched over a considerable area at that time. It was also King Niqmadu who built three large libraries containing clay tablets written in the Ugaritic and Babylonian cuneiform scripts. We are indebted to them for our abundant information about Ugaritic religion and culture. Documents of all kinds were deposited in these libraries, among them a number of letters. Thus on one occasion the king writes to his mother in words that show his deep affection for her and give us an insight into the refinement of the royal court.

To the queen, my mother, speak: A message from the king, thy son. I fall down at the feet of my mother! May my mother be well! May the gods protect thee and bring thee blessing! Behold, with me everything goes very well. Is everything well with my mother there also? Send me a reply. With a votive gift I have honoured the queen.

We also find lists of persons and towns, of supplies of clothing and other things besides.

The relationship between King Niqmadu II and the Hittite king Suppiluliumas was a close one; he may temporarily have been the latter's vassal. A letter that has survived, written by Niqmadu to Suppiluliumas in Ugaritic cuneiform script and language, is probably a copy of one in Babylonian sent to the Hittite royal court, for Babylonian

was the official language and script for diplomatic purposes. In this letter, of which unfortunately only fragments have been preserved, Niqmadu II enumerates all the presents he has sent to Suppiluliumas – ‘to the sun-god, the great king, his lord’ – and not only to him, but also to the queen and the senior state officials.

Niqmadu II’s foreign ties appear to have led in the course of time to the rise of opposition within his state. In a religious text found at Ugarit King Niqmadu II and his consort Nesheti are reprimanded for their friendly relations with the Hittites and others who had sacked and plundered their country. But this is presented in such a manner as to suggest that it was primarily the deities of the country that had been offended: ‘Niqmadu has been expelled; oh, they, the friends of the Hittites, the Hurri . . . transgressed your [the gods’] commandments.’ And finally the hope is expressed that the gods may be appeased by a sacrificial offering.

During the subsequent period, too, Ugarit must to some extent have been dependent upon the Hittite king. The son of Niqmadu II had his territory reduced by a Hittite king, and in the great battle which took place near Kadesh on the Orontes in 1288 Ugarit fought on the Hittite side. During the twelfth century Ugarit may have fallen victim to the invading ‘peoples of the sea’.

The city-kingdom of Byblos, situated to the south of Ugarit on the Syrian coast, was already an extensive settlement in the fourth millennium BC. We have seen above how the Egyptian kings gained a footing here in the third millennium in order to obtain cedar-wood with which to build their temples and mummy sarcophagi. At the end of the third millennium the city was destroyed, no doubt by an attack from the landward side. While the Egyptians exerted their influence from across the sea, Babylonian culture also made some impact. This is evident from a scholar’s cuneiform tablet, found at Byblos, dating from the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2000 BC). One may also date the invention of the Gublitic script, to which reference has already been made, to this period, the beginning of the second millennium. One of the texts written in this script describes the decoration of an Egyptian temple at Byblos, and mentions statues of the Egyptian deities Shu, Isis, Amun, Khons, Apis, Thoth and others.

Thus there gradually developed a blend of religious concepts, some derived from Egypt and others native to Byblos itself. An example of

this is the presence on Egyptian coffins of the following inscription: 'Hathor, the mistress of Byblos, makes the rudders of your ships, o ye dead.' The names of the princes of Byblos mentioned in contemporary Egyptian inscriptions are all more or less Semitic in origin.

By about 1700 cultural life in Byblos, as in many other cities of the region, seems to have been on the wane. Thutmosis III resumed his expeditions to Byblos, and not far from the 'mistress of Byblos', in the 'land of god', as he calls Palestine-Syria, he had ships built of cedar-wood. In addition to the actual sea-port, several towns in the mountains and along the coast belonged to this city-kingdom. The temple of the city hoarded large quantities of gold and silver; yet one prince of Byblos in this period, Rib-Addi, emphatically reminded the king of Egypt that much silver and other produce had been sent there from Egypt in former times.

Much trouble was also caused by the Habiru Hebrews, who had invaded the country. We encounter this people in Mesopotamia as early as the third millennium, and during the first half of the second millennium they appear in the Hittite sphere of influence. Shortly afterwards they invaded and ravaged Palestine-Syria. As has already been mentioned, they are referred to, in many El-Amarna letters to the Egyptian pharaohs, as the principal danger to Egyptian rule. They are definitely identical with the Apuriyu of Egyptian inscriptions and with the Ibrim of the Old Testament, i.e. with the Hebrews. Repeated calls for assistance went out to the Egyptian court. In a warning tone Rib-Addi reminded the king of Egypt that Byblos was just as important to him as the Egyptian city of Memphis. Their situation became ever more difficult. They had to sell their sons and daughters abroad in exchange for supplies of corn. Finally the citizens rose up in rebellion against their prince, and he was seriously wounded in an attempt to assassinate him. He was eventually forced to flee to Beirut, which was probably part of his realm. In a spirit of the utmost dejection Rib-Addi wrote to the king of Egypt that the gods of Byblos had never yet fled from the city. His last words to the king of Egypt were: 'And may the king, my lord, know that the gods of Byblos are holy and that I have made my sins known unto them.'

No doubt the situation of Byblos improved under the rule of the pharaohs Seti I and Ramses II. We have an Egyptian illustration showing princes of the Lebanon cutting down trees for Seti I (plate 14); at Byblos itself excavations have yielded a statue of his successor Ramses II

(1292-1225). The attacks by the 'peoples of the sea' from the Aegean in the twelfth century did not entirely destroy the city, for it lived on in history. But Egyptian power was now in a state of steady decline, as is shown by a document dating from the reign of Ramses IX (1142-1123), according to which some Egyptian envoys were retained at Byblos for seventeen years. Still clearer evidence of this decline of Egyptian power in Palestine-Syria, especially at Byblos, is given in the graphic account by the Egyptian Wen-Amun, written during Ramses II's reign.

Wen-Amun sets out for Syria in an Egyptian barque to fetch timber for the construction of the temple of Amun. While calling at the Palestinian port of Dor, a member of the crew escapes and steals some silver and gold vessels. Wen-Amun seeks to hold the prince of Dor responsible for this, but the latter rejects his demand: the theft has not been committed by anyone from his country, and hence he is not liable to pay compensation. (We are justified in assuming that this line of reasoning implied the existence of a legal norm: had a citizen of Dor committed the theft, the prince of Dor would have had to make amends.) Wen-Amun obtains no compensation, and continues on his journey; by way of Tyre he reaches Byblos. The prince of Byblos immediately orders him to leave his harbour, but Wen-Amun can find no vessel in which to depart. While the prince of Byblos is rendering sacrifice to the gods, so the account goes on, a young man in the vicinity falls into a trance, and advises the prince of Byblos to let Wen-Amun depart. This episode is of interest since religious ecstasies of this kind were common to the first groups of prophets in Israel. After a few days' delay Wen-Amun is allowed to set out on his return journey with the timber.

There were, however, times when Egyptians were treated differently in Palestine-Syria. In one Egyptian document of this period we read a sentence that seems to convey a sense of disappointment: 'Today no journeys are any longer made to Byblos. What shall we do, then, to obtain cedars for our mummies?'

During the first millennium BC Byblos occupied the first place among the city-kingdoms along the Syrian coast. As a result of excavations carried out by French scholars, a large number of inscriptions have been brought to light, some of them dating from the tenth and ninth centuries BC. The most important monument discovered is the sarcophagus of King Ahiram, donated by his son, which bears an inscription in Old Semitic script (plate 15):

This sarcophagus was made by Itobaal, the son of Ahiram, king of Byblos, for Ahiram, his father, when he laid him down for all eternity. And should a king among kings, a prince among princes, or a commander of an army take the field against Byblos and lay bare his sarcophagus: may the sceptre of his dominion break asunder, may the throne of his government collapse, and may peace flee from Byblos.

And at the entrance to the sepulchral chamber are written the words: 'Beware! See, down below it shall go ill with thee.' In this way the grave was to be assured of eternal peace.

One of Ahiram's immediate successors, Yehi-melik, has left us an inscription in which he mentions, as well as the entire holy pantheon of Byblos, two deities in particular – Baal of Heaven and Baalat of Byblos – and then at the end gives himself an excellent testimony: 'For a just and upright king am I before the gods, the holy ones of Byblos.' During the ninth century Assur-nasir-apal II, king of Assyria, mentions payment of tribute by the land of Byblos. The same message is to be found in the inscriptions of later Assyrian rulers who encroached upon Palestinian-Syrian territory, although we do not hear of any battles being fought against Byblos. But then, this rich commercial city would not have had any difficulty in paying its dues to the Assyrian kings, and so Byblos was spared the assaults of the Assyrian and Babylonian invaders.

A long inscription of King Yehaw-melik, dating from between the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth centuries BC, has been preserved, in which the king tells of the many things he has dedicated to Baalat of Byblos: a bronze altar, a door sheathed with gold plate, and a pillared hall. A sepulchral inscription which a queen mother of Byblos had ordered to be engraved upon the lid of her sarcophagus, and which dates probably from this same period, reads as follows: 'In this sarcophagus lie I, Batnoam, mother of King Ozbaal, king of Byblos, priest of Baalat. Clad in a dress, with a head-band upon me and a gold seal on my mouth, as befits the queens who came before me.'

A little to the north of Beirut, at the mouth of the 'Dog River' (Nahr el-Kelb), is a unique monument (plate 45) which furnishes eloquent testimony to the struggle that was waged for Palestine-Syria by its powerful neighbours. On a slightly raised path along the shore the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, six Assyrian kings and the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar II immortalized themselves in pictures and inscriptions, the first of which dates from the thirteenth century. This may have

been a particularly sacred spot, since foreign kings chose it as well, but we do not know this for certain.

South of Byblos lay the city of Tyre, on an island off the Syrian coast. The Bible relates that its king, Hiram, helped Solomon to erect his buildings, for which he was rewarded with twenty cities in Galilee. Soon, however, the threat from Assyria became acute for Tyre as well; time and again it was compelled to pay tribute to the kings of Assyria; time and again it endeavoured to shake off the Assyrian yoke. A curious treaty was concluded between King Baal of Tyre and the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, who ruled from 680 to 668 BC: Baal of Tyre was allowed to read a letter from the king of Assyria only in the presence of the Assyrian governor; if one of Baal's ships was wrecked on the coast of Assyria, then the cargo was to belong to the Assyrians but the crew were to be released; finally, new frontier lines were fixed. Baal of Tyre seems to have regarded these terms as too burdensome, for he soon deserted Esarhaddon, only to be quickly subjugated again. This event is represented on a stele found at Senjirli. Esarhaddon, depicted larger than life-size, is holding two kings (Baal of Tyre and Tirhaka of Egypt) fast by two cords pulled through their noses. Tyre was finally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II in 570 BC – an event frequently mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel (26: 3 ff.).

The city-kingdoms of Palestine-Syria were never to regain their complete freedom, for Babylonian rule was soon superseded by that of the Persians and later by that of the Greeks.

During the first millennium BC a fairly large state came into being around Damascus. It is already mentioned in Egyptian sources and in the El-Amarna letters in the middle of the second millennium. Damascus first acquired historical importance when it was subjugated by David, as recorded in the Bible. But under Solomon the people of Damascus had already freed themselves from Israelite rule, and soon the tables were turned. During the ninth century Damascus became one of the bitterest foes of the northern Israelite kingdom. This was the period when Israel was engaged in the onerous Aramaic Wars against Benhadad I, Benhadad II, Hazael and Benhadad III; only the threat from Assyria gradually put an end to these conflicts. The Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III conquered Damascus in 732. His next successor but one, Sargon II, deported the native upper classes and settled foreigners in their place; the same fate befell the northern Israelite kingdom. With

his characteristic flair for generalization, the prophet Isaiah incorporated this event into his prophecy; his words bring out the fact that with the fall of Damascus the people of Israel had lost one of their bulwarks:

Behold, Damascus will cease to be a city, and will become a heap of ruins . . . The fortress will disappear from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria will be like the glory of the children of Israel, says the Lord of hosts. (Isaiah 17: 1-3)

A fate similar to that of Damascus befell the city of Hamath, situated in northern Syria, which could trace its origin back to the fifth millennium BC. Hard pressed for some time by Damascus, it eventually also succumbed to the Assyrians; here, too, the Assyrian king Sargon II settled alien peoples from the Armenian plateau. To the south of Hamath are the remains of Qatna (modern El-Mishrife) (plate 21).

In the most northerly part of Syria, forty-four miles north-east of the Gulf of Alexandretta, lay the state of Yaudi. Its capital, Samal, was located at the site of the modern Senjirli. Texts found at Mari indicate that a tribe called the Samal already existed in the seventeenth century. Then our sources dry up for nearly one thousand years, until the discovery by the German scholar E. von Luschan of numerous inscriptions which throw much light on the history of this city-kingdom in the ninth and eighth centuries BC.

During the ninth century the Assyrians under King Shalmaneser III had already invaded Yaudi territory, at a time when it was ruled by King Kilamua. We possess an unusual inscription by this king which can in a sense be considered an account of his life. Writing in the Old Semitic script, and in a Canaanite dialect, Kilamua tells us everything that his predecessors did *not* do:

Gabar ruled over Yaudi, and he achieved nothing. Then came Bamah, and he achieved nothing. And then came my father Haya and he achieved nothing. And then came my brother Shual, and he achieved nothing. But I have achieved things which my predecessors did not achieve.

And he proceeds to tell of his own meritorious deeds:

I, Kilamua, acceded to the throne of my father. Because of the conduct of the earlier kings the poor people were going about like dogs. But I became

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their father, I became their mother, and I became their brother. And whoever had never set eyes upon a sheep, I made owner of a flock. And whoever had never set eyes upon an ox, I made owner of a herd of cattle, the owner of silver and the owner of gold. And whoever had never in his life seen a piece of linen, in my days he was clad in byssus. And I took the poor by the hand, and their relationship to me was that of an orphan to its mother.

Inscriptions found in Senjirli about one hundred years later tell of further kings of the state of Samal. Panamu and Bar-Rekub give accounts of their battles and the offerings they rendered to the gods. This state, too, met its end in the Assyrian invasion.

About sixteen miles east of the town of Antakya on the Syrian coast lies a sizeable occupied mound known as Tell Atchana, which the British archaeologist L. Woolley began to excavate in 1937. The old tell turned out to be the ancient city of Alalakh, the capital of a country called Mukish, familiar to students of Near Eastern history from Egyptian inscriptions (plate 17). This settlement was occupied from the fourth millennium onwards, with occasional interruptions, and began to play an important role in the eighteenth century BC. At this time it was the second capital of the country of Yamchad, the first capital of which was Aleppo. The most prominent of its kings in this period was Yarim-Lim, of whom a bust may have survived. The Egyptian pharaoh Thutmosis III appointed as king of Alalakh a man by the name of Taku. After Thutmosis III's death, when Egyptian pressure eased, the Hurri Empire came to exert ever greater influence upon the fortunes of the state of Mukish. The next successor but one of Taku, Niqmepa, built a large palace. From the forecourt a staircase led into a huge chamber with still extant column-bases, leading to the so-called 'audience hall'. This chamber contained a curious, highly stylized ram's head carved from stone, a unique work without parallel elsewhere (plates 16, 17 and 18).

Niqmepa's successor, Ilim-ilimma, apparently met his end in the course of a revolt. The events that followed this rebellion are recorded by his son, Idrimi II, in a cuneiform inscription on a statue found at Alalakh. The king is seated upon a plinth, his hands crossed upon his chest; the face is not very attractive. In his inscription Idrimi II recounts how, after his father's death, he had to flee to a town on the Orontes. As he did not feel safe there either, he fled once more and finally joined a group of Habiru Hebrews, among whom he lived for seven years. Eventually Idrimi II became reconciled with the mighty king of the

Hurri, and returned to his country by ship. Subsequently, as a vassal of the Hurri king, he participated in a campaign against the Hittites from which he returned with abundant spoils. He now set about restoring his country, and among other things rebuilt his father's palace, which had been burned down. It is at this time that a particularly attractive type of ceramic ware may have been imported from the area that was under Hurri cultural influence, most appropriately called 'Tell Atchana ware' after the place where it was found. Alalakh continued in existence until the twelfth century BC. In the final period the entrance to the city temple was embellished with some fine lions in basalt, which show Hittite influence.

Of the Syrian coastal cities the one closest to Israelite territory was Sidon. French excavations carried out in 1914 revealed that there had already been a settlement here during the eighteenth century BC. But it is only as a result of the discovery of the El-Amarna letters that this city has acquired historical importance. At that time, during the fourteenth century, its king, Zimreda, seems to have been in constant conflict with the city of Tyre to the north. In the Ugaritic epic of Keret and Hurriya mention is made of a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess 'Elat of Sidon', which was probably located in this city. When the Israelites invaded Palestine they were unsuccessful in their efforts to conquer Sidon. This city in turn seems to have engaged in colonization on the continent, for Sidon's laws and customs prevailed far into Galilee.

Assyrian kings repeatedly report that they have taken Sidon. During the seventh century the city appears to have offered resistance to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, who destroyed it and founded another city close by, which he called Esarhaddon's Castle. In the writings of the later Old Testament prophets the inhabitants of Sidon are subjected to censure. The prophet Joel reproaches them for engaging in the slave trade and the prophet Ezekiel proclaims that God will punish them for having joined forces with all the other neighbours of the southern Israelite kingdom in plundering Jerusalem when the city was destroyed in 586 BC.

About two hundred years later we may turn for information to some Old Semitic sepulchral inscriptions found at Sidon, left by kings of the fourth century. One king by the name of Tabnit refers to himself first as priest of the goddess Ashtoreth and only in second place as king of the Sidonians. Then he requests all those who approach his tomb not to

disturb his eternal rest. Far more informative is the sepulchral inscription left by his successor Eshmunazar II. After giving an exact date the king announces: 'I was taken before my time, child of too few days, young man, orphan, son of a widow; and here I lie in this stone coffin and in this tomb and in the place which I myself have built.' Then the inscription goes on to warn that no one should open his coffin, for it contains no valuables. The king goes on to describe the buildings he erected in Sidon; and finally there is another admonition against disturbing the peace of his tomb. Several small inscriptions from his successors have likewise been preserved.

Throughout their history all these cities along the Syrian coast – Sidon, Tyre, Beirut (Beirut), Byblos and Ugarit – looked seawards rather than landwards. The bold voyages undertaken by this seafaring people led to ever-expanding colonization in Cyprus, southern Italy, southern France and Malta, reaching a climax in Africa – in Carthage, the 'new city'. Whereas the Syrian coastal cities were quick to absorb Hellenistic culture, these colonies of the 'Phoenicians', as the Greeks called them, retained their Semitic character for much longer. Evidence of this may be seen in the numerous inscriptions in Punic script.

A few miles east of Haifa is the imposing occupied mound of Tell-el-Mutesellim, called Megiddo in ancient times, and explored during the first half of the present century by German and American scholars. This very ancient city can trace its origin back to the fifth millennium BC, and the presence of a flourishing spring close by no doubt played an important part in the founding of this city. Towards the beginning of the second millennium BC the first scarabs and statues of Egyptian origin appear. The great battle between Thutmose III and a Palestinian-Syrian coalition in 1478 BC was fought at Megiddo, and during this engagement, the prince who ruled in the El-Amarna era suffered greatly from attacks by the Habiru Hebrews. The city must have been a wealthy one, as is evident from the many finds of pieces of gold jewellery and ivory carvings. During the Israelite monarchy it was one of the strongest fortresses in the country.

When a city is besieged the most vital thing for the beleaguered garrison, apart from the food supply, is water. Where such a settlement drew its water from a spring, and not from a cistern, care had to be taken to maintain access to it even during war-time. This led to the construction of canals running from the interior of the fortress to the

spring. The first of these, four in number, was discovered in Jerusalem. All of them had their origin at a spot near the spring of the Virgin Mary east of the city. During the last few decades six more canal systems of this kind have been found, the largest of them at Megiddo. As this was the mightiest stronghold in the plain of Jezreel, it was naturally a matter of life and death for it to have a more or less guaranteed supply of water in war-time. A little to the north of the city is an abundant source which today is called El-Kubbi. To reach the water of this spring without interference from the enemy during a siege, a vertical shaft was dug within the perimeter of the fort, and from this a horizontal corridor about 195 feet long led to the spring. As regards the date when this aqueduct was built, it can only be said for certain that it existed already in the twelfth century. A water supply system of equal importance was in Gibeon. (See plate 44.)

The city of Beth-Shan ('Temple of the god Shachan') east of Megiddo in the Jordan valley, which is likewise very ancient, was enlarged by the Egyptians in the middle of the second millennium BC to form a strong fort which could control the road along the valley. Excavations here have yielded a large number of finds testifying to Egyptian rule. Pride of place among them is taken by two stelae of the Egyptian kings Ramses II (1292-1225 BC) and Ramses III (1198-1167 BC). (See plates 20, 21.)

We have already discussed the earliest history of Jericho, which lies in the Jordan valley south of Beth-Shan. For millennia this city remained inhabited, fed by the abundant waters of its source, until its history was abruptly terminated in 1400 BC. What the Bible in the Book of Joshua links with the immigration of the Israelites in approximately 1200 BC in fact occurred two hundred years earlier. The walls, which according to the Biblical account were so strong that they could only be overcome by supernatural force, were discovered in the course of the excavations. But they had already been destroyed two hundred years before the immigration under Joshua took place. The connection between the two events was a later invention. With the destruction of this massive wall the history of Jericho came to an end: there was a small settlement in a much later period, but it was of no significance.

Among other city-kingdoms which still played an important role in the second millennium were Jerusalem, Shechem and Taanach. All of them have been explored by excavations or else are mentioned in literary monuments.

If we ask ourselves why the city-kingdoms of Palestine-Syria did not

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come to form a single empire, which would have been in a better position to resist foreign invaders, the answer may lie in the fact that they lacked a great unifying idea. We shall see below what a great part the new belief in the God of Moses played in founding the kingdom of David and how, even after the kingdom had been divided, it provided a unifying bond, although only to a small extent. Such an idea did not occur to the Canaanites in the second millennium BC: their religion could not make this leap forward.

4 *Religious Life of the Canaanites*

The Canaanite pantheon in the second millennium BC was very variegated. Excavations have fully confirmed earlier assumptions, made on the basis of the sparse data contained in the Old Testament. One statue after another, each representing a different deity with a character all its own, has been wrenched from the rubble of millennia. Baal, so often mentioned in the Old Testament, appears before us in many variants. Only in a few instances do these statues or stelae also bear an inscription recording the name of the deity whom they represent. We thus have to distinguish and classify them according to their dress, their headgear, and in some cases the posture of the hands.

We would not know very much about the Canaanite gods if these statues were our only source of information. But in addition to pictorial representations, excavation work at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) also revealed a large number of literary texts, myths and epics. These are written on clay in an Ugaritic alphabetic cuneiform script, and in a language reminiscent of Hebrew. In these myths the mute figures of the gods come to life. There opens up before us a singular religious world in which gods are thought of as large-sized human beings, with all their good and bad qualities.

We shall quote extensively from these ancient texts, since they throw light not only on religious matters but also on the cultural life of the time, and give us a vivid picture of the way in which men thought, spoke and lived.

THE MYTH OF ANATH, BAAL AND MOT

The warrior goddess Anath, the fertility god Baal, and the god of death Mot are the principal figures in a great myth based on the eternal

cycle of death and rebirth in nature. Interwoven in it are other deities such as the supreme god El, his consort Asherat, and a horde of lesser gods, divine messengers and the like.

At the beginning of the text, which is somewhat mutilated, Baal is introduced at a sacrificial banquet. He has drunk wine from a magic cup and is in high spirits:

He arose to sing and rejoice,
with cymbals in his hands, the amiable One,
the prince, in fine voice, sang.
Baal ascended the heights of Zaphon;
Baal caught sight of his daughters;
he saw Padriya, daughter of light
and also Taliya, daughter of rain.

Here the text breaks off; when it begins again the goddess Anath appears, intending to cause a dreadful massacre among men.

And young men were carried off
by the 'Lady of the Mountain'. And behold,
Anath fought violently, killing
the people of the two cities;
she smote the people of the sea-shore,
destroyed mankind at sunrise.
Under her are heads like globes,
over her are hands like grasshoppers,
like multitudes the hands of warriors.
She tied the heads behind her back,
she fastened the hands to her belt;
she plunged knee-deep in the blood of warriors,
her thighs sank in the gore of heroes.
With her stick she drove out the aged;
she drew her bow at their loins.
And behold, Anath went into her house,
the goddess turned towards her temple.

She drew water and washed herself
with the dew of heaven, the fat of the earth,
the rain of the Rider of Clouds,
the dew that descends from heaven,
with the rain shed by the stars.

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Later Baal sends a message to Anath by way of the divine messengers Gapan and Ugar, to bring peace to the world :

Message of the sublime Baal,
word of the Lord of Heroes :
'Take war away from the earth,
banish all strife from the soil ;
pour peace into the midst of the earth,
much love into the midst of the fields.
Let thy feet hurry to me.
Let thy legs run to me.
Lo, I have a word I would tell thee,
a speech I would utter to thee,
a message, and I will repeat it to thee :
the word of the tree and the whisper of the stone,
the murmuring of heaven to earth,
of the ocean deeps to the stars.
I created lightning so that heaven might recognize it.
A word not known to men,
uncomprehended by the multitudes on earth.
Come, and I will reveal it
in the midst of my holy Mount Zaphon,
in the sanctuary, on the mount of my inheritance.'

Anath sees the messengers arrive and becomes anxious. She believes that Baal is threatened by some enemy and recalls how often she herself has already vanquished hostile powers :

What enemy has risen against Baal,
what foe against the Rider of Clouds ?
Verily, I have crushed Yam, the favourite of El ;
verily, I have destroyed the river, the great god ;
verily, I muzzled Tannin, I muzzled him ;
I crushed the writhing seven-headed serpent ;
I crushed El's beloved, Arash ;
I destroyed El's calf, Atak ;
I crushed El's bitch, Ishat ;
I put an end to El's daughter, Shabib !
I shall fight and seize the gold
of those who would drive Baal from the heights of Zaphon,
chase him from his royal throne,
from his dais, from the seat of his dominion !

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The two divine messengers set Anath's mind at rest by assuring her that Baal is not in danger, and deliver their message. Anath agrees to ensure world peace and enters the palace of the gods. Now with frequent repetition, as in all true epics, it is said that the god Baal as yet has no palace that he can call his own, such as the other gods have :

No house hath Baal like other gods,
nor home like the sons of Asherat.

Anath flies into a rage and threatens El, who finally declares himself willing to hand over his power to Baal. Anath is reconciled and the other gods repeat their demand that a palace be built for Baal. As the defective text shows, this question is discussed at length among the gods. Finally the goddess Asherat goes to El in order to secure his consent to the building of a palace for Baal ; Anath and Baal also appear before him.

'Verily,' cried Princess Asherat of the Sea :
'saddle the ass, harness the donkey,
put on the harness of silver,
the trappings of gold.
Prepare the harness of the jenny !'
Qadesh-Amurru heard this ;
he saddled the ass, harnessed the donkey,
put on the harness of silver,
the trappings of gold.
He prepared the harness of her jenny.
Qadesh-Amurru embraced her,
he put Asherat on the donkey's back,
on the comely back of the ass.
Qadesh was moved to send forth light,
Amurru went like a star ahead.
Forward went the virgin Anath
with Baal, and reached the heights of Zaphon.
Lo, verily, they turned towards El,
at the sources of the two rivers
between the two deep oceans.
She [Asherat] entered the house of El,
and came into the palace of the king, the father.
At the feet of El she prostrated herself,
fell down, bowed and honoured him.
No sooner had El perceived her than
he opened his mouth and laughed ;

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he set his feet upon his footstool
and snapped his fingers.
He raised his voice and cried :
'What, is Princess Asherat of the Sea come?
What, does she who created the gods appear?
Art thou hungry? Then eat!
Lo, art thou thirsty? Then drink!
Eat, indeed, drink!
Eat bread from the tables,
Drink wine from the jug,
the blood of the vine from the golden goblet!
Lo, the love of El will move thee,
the affection of the bull will arouse thee!'
And Princess Asherat of the Sea replied :
'Thy word, El, is wise ;
thou art wise unto eternity!
May happiness in life be thy word.
May the great Baal be our king, our judge!
And may none be above him!
Let us both bear him his gift,
let us both bear him his pouch.
Verily, let ships be summoned by the bull-god, his father,
El, the king, who brought him into being!'

The goddess Asherat and the other deities repeat their earlier request
that a palace be built for Baal, until El finally gives his consent.

The palace of cedars shall be complete,
lo, the palace of bricks shall be erected;
verily, let it be told unto Baal :
'call diggers of earth into thy palace,
and builders into the midst of thy temple!
The mountains shall bring thee much silver,
and the hills the choicest of gold.
Camels shall bring you precious stones,
a palace of precious stones!'
The virgin Anath rejoiced ; she stamped
with her feet, and the earth shook.
Then she turned
to Baal on the heights of Zaphon
across one thousand fields, ten thousand plots.
The virgin Anath laughed, raised
her voice and cried : 'Rejoice, O Baal!

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Glad tidings have I brought you ;
a palace shall be built for thee as for thy brothers
and a sanctuary as for thy companions.
Call diggers of earth into thy palace,
and builders into the midst of thy temple !
The mountains shall bring thee much silver,
and the hills the choicest of gold.
And build a palace of silver and gold,
a palace of precious stones !'
Rejoicing filled the noble Baal ;
he called diggers of earth into his palace,
and builders into the midst of his temple.
The mountains brought him much silver,
and the hills the choicest of gold.

Now the goddess Kothar-Khasis appears before Baal, who commissions her to build a palace, and the following dialogue ensues :

'Hearken, verily, O noble Baal,
give ear, O Rider of Clouds !
Verily, I shall put a window in the palace,
a casement in the midst of the temple !'
And noble Baal replied :
'Thou shalt not put a window in the palace,
a casement in the midst of the temple !'
But Kothar-Khasis replied :
'Thou shalt agree to my proposal, O Baal.'
For the second time Kothar-Khasis said :
'Hearken, O noble Baal !
Verily, I shall put a window in the palace,
a casement in the midst of the temple.'
But the noble Baal replied :
'Thou shalt not put a window in the palace,
a casement in the midst of the temple !'

The argument – so interesting to the cultural historian – was decided in favour of the window. Now commences the building of the palace, which ends with a great fire. When the building of his palace is completed, Baal arranges a banquet for the other gods. At this Mot, god of death, appears. He demands from Baal dominion over the world, to which the latter hesitatingly consents. One day Baal is dead and all vegetation on earth perishes. El and Anath set out in search of the deceased Baal :

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Thereupon the genial El
stepped down from his throne, seated himself
upon his footstool, and from his footstool
seated himself upon earth. He poured
dust upon his head, upon his skull.
He lacerated himself with a stone,
and made incisions with a piece of wood.
He cut his cheeks and chin,
'ploughed' the upper part of his arm,
'tilled' his chest like a garden
and his back like a vale.
He raised up his voice and cried:
'Baal is dead!
What will become of mankind?
Behind Baal I will descend to earth.'

Anath, too, sets out in search of Baal, and with the help of the sun goddess Shapash succeeds in finding him.

Anath walked; she hastened
through every mountain to the interior of the earth,
through every hill to the midst of the fields.

Eventually they find Baal dead, and Anath bursts into tears:

Then Anath wept her fill of weeping,
she drank tears like wine. Aloud she
called unto the light of the gods, Shapash:
'lift up unto me the noble Baal!'
Shapash, light of the gods, heard this;
she picked up the noble Baal,
and on Anath's shoulder, where she laid him,
brought him to the heights of Zaphon.
She bewailed him and buried him,
placed him in the pit of the gods of the earth.
Seventy wild bulls she slaughtered
as a sacrificial offering for Baal.

Now the goddess Asherat appears before El in his palace and expresses to him her joy at the death of Baal. El asks her to name one of her sons as a fit successor to Baal. Asherat does so, but none of her sons proves to be suited.

Anath sets out to free her brother Baal from the nether world:

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One day, two days passed by
until the virgin Anath approached Mot.
Like the heart of a cow for her calf,
like the heart of an ewe for her lamb,
so was the heart of Anath for Baal.
She seized Mot by the hem of his garment,
grasped him by the flap of his garment,
raised her voice and cried:
'Come, Mot, give me my brother!'
And Mot, the son of El, replied:
'What dost thou ask, O virgin Anath?
I have wandered and hastened
through every mountain to the heart of the earth,
through every hill to the midst of the fields.
My soul languished for the children of men,
my soul languished for mankind on earth.
I came to the delight of the land,
to the beauty of the fields.
I destroyed the noble Baal,
I treated him as a lamb in my mouth;
like a kid in my jaws was he crushed.'
The light of the gods, Shapash, shone,
the heavens glowed with love for Mot, the son of El.
One day, two days passed by,
days became months.
The virgin Anath approached him.
Like the heart of a cow for her calf,
like the heart of an ewe for her lamb,
so was the heart of Anath for Baal.
She seized Mot, the son of El,
with a sword she cleft him,
pierced him, with fire she burnt him,
with two millstones she crushed him,
in the fields she scattered him.
Verily, the birds ate his remains
and put an end to the parts of his body.

Hardly has the god of death, Mot, been killed than Baal is resurrected,
and El sees in his dream how the vegetation reappears on earth.

In a dream the genial El,
in a vision the Creator of living things saw:
'The heavens did pour forth fat,

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the rivers flowed with honey.'
The genial El was joyful,
he placed his feet upon his footstool,
opened his mouth and laughed;
he raised his voice and cried:
'Now will I be seated and rest,
and my soul shall be at ease in my breast.
For the noble Baal lives,
for the prince, the lord of earth, is at hand!'

But Mot, the god of death, reappears and a fight breaks out between him and Baal:

They fought like bulls.
Mot was strong, Baal was strong;
they gored one another like wild bulls.
Mot was strong, Baal was strong;
they bit one another like snakes.
Mot was strong, Baal was strong;
they stamped like fiery chargers.
Mot grew weak, Baal grew weak.
From above, Shapash called to Mot:
'Hearken to me, O Mot, son of El.
Why strivest thou with the noble Baal?
The bull-god, thy father, will not listen to thee!
He will turn over the throne upon which thou art seated;
he will overthrow the throne of thy dominion;
he will break thy sceptre of power.'

With this the myth comes to an end. Among the gods we may clearly distinguish two groups: on one side are El, Asherat and Mot, and on the other Anath and Baal. It is easy for us to imagine this myth being performed as a mystery play at religious festivals. It is possible that the Mesopotamian myth of Ishtar and Tammuz exerted an influence on the notion of Anath and Baal.

THE MYTH OF THE BATTLE BETWEEN BAAL AND THE SEA GOD YAM

In the myth of Anath, Baal and Mot, the antagonist of Baal, god of vegetation, was Mot, god of death; in this myth it is the sea god Yam – god of the stormy sea with its bottomless depths and rocky reefs. At the

beginning El tells Kothar-Khasis, whom we have already encountered, to build a palace for the sea god Yam. Here, as in the former myth, the god El does not appear to be a friend of the god Baal; this enmity may perhaps still be reflected in the Old Testament view that among the broad mass of the population the cult of El was superseded by that of Baal. The god Ashtar makes an attempt to counteract the command of the god El, but is warned of El's wrath by the sun goddess Shapash. Now Baal appears, uttering severe threats against Yam. The latter is not discouraged and sends messengers to the assembly of the gods to demand Baal's gold.

'Go, servants, verily, do not tarry;
now shall ye make your way to the group of the assembly,
to Mount Lilu. At the feet of El
shall ye fall and bow down before the group of the assembly.
Repeat your command and say to the bull, his father El:
"A message from Yam, your prince, your lord, judge of the river:
Entreat, O gods, him in whom you confide, in whom mankind confides!
Entreat Baal, the son of Dagon, so that I may acquire his gold."'
The servants set forth, they did not tarry,
they made their way to Mount Lilu, to the assembled group of gods.
The gods, the sons of the sanctuary, were sitting at their meal.
Baal was standing next to El. As soon as the gods perceived them,
perceived the messengers of Yam, the emissaries of the judge of the river,
then the gods lowered their heads upon their knees
and upon the throne of their principality. Baal rebuked them:
'Why, O gods, do ye lower your heads upon your knees
and upon the throne of your principality? Let some gods read
the tablets of the messenger of Yam, the emissary of the judge of the river.
Lift, O gods, your heads from your knees,
from the throne of your principality! And I will reply to the messenger
of Yam!'

The messengers of Yam thereupon appear, and Baal gives them a negative reply. El alone requests Baal to do as Yam wishes; Baal in turn wishes to attack Yam's messengers, but is prevented from doing so by the goddesses Anath and Ashtaret. In the end there is a fierce fight between Baal and Yam, initiated by the former with the encouragement of Kothar-Khasis. He produces two clubs, to which he gives symbolic names. With these two weapons Baal finally succeeds in overcoming Yam.

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And from the hand of Baal the club came down
like an eagle from his fingers.
He smote the head of Prince Yam,
smote the lord of the river between the eyes.
Yam sank down, stooped
towards the earth, his countenance was troubled
and his figure shrank.
Baal drank up Yam,
put an end to the judge of the river.

The myth ends with the goddess Ashtaret rebuking Baal for proceeding in this way against Yam.

THE MYTH OF NIKAL

In the myth of Nikal's wedding we encounter a completely different pantheon. This may be due to the fact that this myth was probably introduced to Syria from a foreign cultural sphere. We are told how the moon god Yareach comes to Khirikhibi, the 'king of summer', and asks him for the hand in marriage of his daughter, who bears the double name of Nikal-Ib.

I sing of Nikal and Ib, daughter
of Khirikhibi, 'king of summer'.
At the going down of the sun
Yareach was filled with passion.
Yareach, light of heaven, sent
to Khirikhibi, 'king of summer', saying:
'Give Nikal, let Yareach wed Ib,
let her enter his house.
And as her bride-price I will pay her father
a thousand shekels of silver
and ten thousand of gold.
I will send precious stones,
I will make her "field" into a vineyard,
the "field of her love" into an orchard.'

Khirikhibi hesitates and advises the moon god, Yareach, to court some other woman instead. But Yareach cannot be gainsaid.

But Yareach, light of heaven, replied:
'With Nikal is my match!'
Thereupon Yareach purchased Nikal.
Her father set up the beam of the balance;

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her mother the scales of the balance;
her brothers arranged the weights of the balance.
Nikal and Ib, to them will I sing;
Yareach is shining brightly
and may Yareach shed his light upon thee.

In addition to these myths, which we owe to the excavations at Ugarit, there are others in most of which Baal likewise occupies the central place. That called 'Hunting Exploits of Baal' tells how the god El creates fabulous creatures, with whom Baal enters into a dispute; he is defeated, and as a result vegetation on earth temporarily ceases to grow. Another myth recounts how the goddess Anath and the god Baal come upon a wild cow in the wilderness. Baal conceives a passion for this animal, and it gives birth to a bull. Yet another myth gives an account of the birth of the two kindly gods Shahr and Shalem, the rising and setting sun. We may, moreover, infer from the vast number of Ugaritic myths that similar poetic works also existed in other city-kingdoms, although similar finds have not yet been made in other sites. It would be a fascinating task to compare all the deities whose appearance is known from images with those described in such a graphic and lively manner in the Ugaritic myths. Can we identify as Baal the god portrayed in a standing posture with raised and clenched fist? Does the seated goddess represent Anath? At any rate both play a very important role in Canaanite myth (plates 26, 27, 28).

As diverse as the Canaanite pantheon itself were the rituals with which these gods were worshipped. We can gain a picture of the temples (such as Baal's temple, the erection of which is described in the myth quoted above) from the important finds made at Qatna and Beth-Shan. In the latter the temple of Mekal has been unearthed. It yielded a cult object characteristic of Palestinian-Syrian temples from the fifth millennium onwards: the sacred stone column. It corresponds to the *masseboth* mentioned so frequently in the Old Testament, which were thought to be the abodes of gods. Stone pillars of this kind occur individually and sometimes also in groups, one behind the other. The next most important feature after the stone pillar is the altar. Altars for vegetal offerings are shaped in such a way that the latter can be placed directly upon the altar. One was found at Ugarit (plate 24). The sun emblem incised upon it may indicate that there was a link between this object and the sun god. Offerings of incense were popular: this was deemed 'a pleasing

odour for the nose of the deity', as one Old Testament source puts it. A fine incense-burning altar comes from Byblos; the upper part is decorated with animals and the lower part with serpents (plate 23). The incense-burning altar found at Taanach, embellished with sphinges, might alternatively have been no more than a stove. It is not quite certain what purpose was served by the small cult objects in clay discovered at Beth-Shan, which likewise bore serpents and small animals as decoration. The frequent appearance of the serpent on cult objects and vessels may be explained by a magical belief that an evil force could be warded off by a picture representing it.

One peculiar cult object unearthed at Ugarit was a basin affixed to a tripod. Is this perhaps the 'sea' which occurs in the Old Testament as well as in other ancient Near Eastern cults? Is it a symbol of the sea god Yam mentioned above or of a 'sacred sea' such as existed at Byblos, or both? (See plate 24.)

A sacrificial scene seems to be depicted upon one stele found at Ugarit. We see a seated deity wearing a horned tiara on his head, his left hand stretched out in a gesture of blessing and his right hand holding a bowl. Before the deity stands a figure holding a jug in his left hand and in his right a staff shaped like a serpent, with a winged sun disc above. Does this scene depict a deity for whom the worshipper is pouring the libation into the bowl, or does it portray a sacrificial act by two priests? In this Canaanite cult streams of blood used to flow, as we are told in many Biblical passages. (See plate 31.)

As everywhere else, so also in Palestine-Syria 'the world of the dead' occupied a prominent place in the minds of the inhabitants. What kind of treatment were the dead given? Into what kind of coffin were they placed, and how were they buried? We have already seen that the earliest inhabitants were moved by such questions. 'It shall not happen that Beduin bury you and wrap you in a ram's skin' – these words from the tale recorded above about the flight from Egypt to Palestine of the Egyptian Sinuhe give us an idea of the way in which the most primitive peoples dealt with their dead. The open grave was probably the most natural form of burial at that time, the deceased being placed either in a contracted or in an extended position. Occasionally we encounter the custom of sealing the mouth with a plate, which was probably intended to afford protection against the spirit of the dead. The same purpose was probably served by the practice of segmenting the skeleton, which we find

at Ugarit. Cremation as well as interment was known in Palestine-Syria.

The kinds of coffin in use were extremely varied. Thus, for example, large urns were employed, especially for the bodies of children, which were frequently sacrificed when a building was erected. 'In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his first-born, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub', we read in the Old Testament (I Kings 16: 34). A more advanced stage is reached with the stone sarcophagus, which was probably reserved for the privileged classes of the population. At different sites in Palestine strata of occupation dating from the second millennium have yielded clay sarcophagi, about 6½ ft. long and 2 ft. wide, into which the dead were placed. Since we find clay sarcophagi of this kind at various sites in Lower Egypt as well, it seems reasonable to assume that they were provided for a certain type of Egyptian mercenary. The house-urns used in Palestine during the fourth millennium reappeared at Ugarit in the second millennium, but of course in a completely different form.

In addition to the open grave, frequent use was made of the 'dwelling grave' – the dead being buried in their own homes, a custom which we also find mentioned in the Old Testament. It is recorded of Samuel that he was buried in his own house. The many natural caves in the area were not only converted into dwellings but also, once permanent houses had been built, into tombs, such as we read of in the Biblical account of Abraham burying his wife in a cave. At Ugarit we encountered the so-called 'pre-Mycenaean shaft grave' – a shaft with an entrance on the top at one side. The influence of the Aegean world upon Ugarit was, however, so great that the Mycenaean domed tomb proper soon became accepted. A broad flight of steps leads into a square space tapering towards the top; the entire structure is of ashlar masonry (plate 25).

The belief in an after-life is shown by the funerary gifts placed in the grave: objects of everyday use, and especially many pitchers and bowls. Sacrifices were made with the object of propitiating and gratifying the spirits of the dead. This earthly custom was gradually transferred to myths, as for example in the Myth of Baal mentioned above. This describes how the goddess Anath, after interring Baal, makes a sacrificial offering for him: 'She buried him, put him into the cave of the gods of the earth. She slaughtered seventy wild oxen as sacrificial offerings for the noble Baal; she slaughtered seventy head of cattle as sacrificial offerings for the noble Baal', etc. – until finally, as the last offering, seventy asses were sacrificed.

5 *Art and Spiritual Culture in the Canaanite Period*

Did the people of ancient Palestine-Syria produce works of art for their own sake? Were there men who enjoyed the beauty of shapes fashioned by human hands? So far as religious art is concerned, these questions must be answered in the affirmative. We have come across statues of deities and stelae bearing sculpture which undeniably possessed an artistic form.

Among works of profane character we may mention a male seated figure found at Ugarit, which is not wearing the symbolic attire associated with gods. At this point reference must be made to a cast-bronze weight in the shape of a bull, likewise from Ugarit. As early as the fifteenth century BC we find the Egyptian king Thutmosis III reporting that he has obtained in Palestine-Syria numerous gold and silver vessels as spoils. For two fine bowls of this kind (one of which is illustrated) we are indebted to the excavations at Ugarit. Lavish gold jewellery was found at Tell el-Ajjul. Another popular custom was to make necklaces of stones and shells. (See plates 33 and 34.)

A prominent place in Palestinian-Syrian art belongs to ivory carvings. In this case foreign influences – from Mesopotamia and Egypt – undoubtedly played a decisive part; but there are also some pieces which are entirely autochthonous in character. Among them is an ivory plaque found at Megiddo: the victorious king is represented seated upon his throne; facing him is his queen, followed by a zither-player; behind the latter one can see prisoners, and finally a war-chariot. A particularly excellent and original piece is the small 'Egyptianized' ivory perfume-bottle found at Tell ed-Duweir. The figure of a woman, originating in Megiddo, is no doubt a native product, as is also an ivory jar. (See plates 32, 35, 36 and 38.)

Vessels were frequently made of faience. But other works of craftsmanship have been handed down as well: for example, a clay chariot from Ugarit bearing two faience figures. It is difficult to decide whether this piece is religious or profane in character. Bone objects were more popular earlier than they were later. Among them is a bone comb, found at Byblos, with decoration on both sides: on one side a satyr holding a flute and a staff in his right hand, while a female figure looks up at him; on the other the engraving of a man, perhaps the owner of the comb.

Pots and bowls for everyday use have their characteristic forms in the second millennium, as they do at other times. During this period foreign

imports, especially from the Aegean world, exercised considerable influence. In this connection we may point to a Mycenaean rhyton in the shape of a hedgehog and a similar piece in the shape of a fish, both from Ugarit. It is instructive to compare a Mycenaean stirrup vase imported to Ugarit with a native copy from Djett in Palestine. Also popular were the so-called animal vases, of which particularly fine specimens have been found at Byblos and Jericho. (See plates 40, 41 and 42.)

If we want to gain an idea of the appearance of the inhabitants of Palestine-Syria in the second millennium BC, we have at our disposal, in addition to the statues of gods, which no doubt emulate human figures, the so-called portrait vases: these bear human faces which were certainly modelled from life (plate 39).

Sculpture was not limited to the religious sphere. The rendering of two combatant lions found at Beth-Shan and the ram's head from Alalakh are definitely first-class works of art (plates 17 and 20).

The endeavour to produce artistic work is apparent even in everyday objects: for example, in a bronze axe from Ugarit, or in another piece of this kind from the same site which is embellished with gold. Weights which were originally no more than lumps of clay took on an artistic form when fashioned into heads which weighed the appropriate amount.

Houses continued to be built on a rectangular plan; and occasionally one comes across tunnel-like structures used for aqueducts.

We have just affirmed that efforts were made to produce works of art in Palestine-Syria during the second millennium; the same positive answer may be given to the question whether a spiritual culture existed in this period. We have already pointed out that Palestine-Syria has one great feat to its credit: it invented a purely alphabetic script. The calendar, too, was known: the names of the months were both borrowed from Babylonia and invented locally. At Ugarit texts were also discovered dealing with veterinary medicine, in which various ailments of horses were listed, together with the appropriate remedies. Various finds seem to afford evidence of the existence of a firmly established judicial system. These texts were mostly written in the Akkadian (Babylonian) script and language. A stele found at Ugarit may represent the conclusion of a treaty (plate 30): it shows two standing figures wearing headgear and stretching out their hands towards one another. Their elbows rest upon square objects which may be treaty documents written in cuneiform script. Such documents, rather than being signed, bore an impression

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made with a cylinder seal; many such seals from Ugarit have survived.

Schools, too, were functioning regularly in Palestine-Syria by the middle of the second millennium. This is corroborated by a letter found at Shechem, written in Babylonian and in the Babylonian cuneiform script. It is slightly damaged at the beginning and at the end, but in the middle the following text can be deciphered quite clearly: 'For three years up to now you have paid me; have you not any corn or oil which you can send? What does my debt consist of that you do not pay? The young people who are with me are leaving in order to learn.' It is quite obvious that we have here a teacher reprimanding some parents for not paying school fees that were due, and which were apparently rendered in natural produce.

At Ugarit a number of clay tablets were unearthed which cannot have been anything other than schoolboys' compositions. On one clay tablet the Ugaritic alphabet is inscribed. Another bears only a list of words beginning with the letter 'y'; on one occasion a pupil had to write out the Ugaritic word for 'ass' thirteen times. The discovery of other tablets on which texts are inscribed in the Akkadian language of Babylonia, but in Ugaritic script, shows that the Akkadian language was studied at Ugarit. Sumerian-Akkadian-Ugaritic-Hurrite dictionaries have also been found.

For all its variety, life in Palestine-Syria also had its human sorrows and difficulties. A private letter found at Ugarit gives us an idea of this:

Message of Iyarshar. Tell Palsay: 'May it fare thee well!' As regards T. and K., I have heard that they are most unhappy. Lo, since they have nothing, they are unhappy. And send them to me. And the love of the gods is here like death: powerful, strong, dreadful and mighty. Your answer and anything you hear transmit to me in a letter.

Besides religious lyrics and myths there was another kind of poetry, the epic, in which were recorded the heroic deeds of men rather than gods – although these are men of superhuman dimensions, and gods do occasionally appear in these epics.

THE EPIC OF DANIEL AND HIS SON AQHAT

Among the most impressive Bible stories which one learns as a child are those of Daniel and his experiences at the royal court of Babylon – of Daniel the interpreter of dreams, who is wiser than all the seers at the

court of the Babylonian king, to whom wild animals can do no harm, and who in his wisdom sees the future in enigmatic visions. In later Jewish works as well Daniel appears in the role of a very wise man who remained alive in people's memory as a judge and as one who triumphed over wild beasts. The fact that the prophet Ezekiel lists Noah, Daniel and Job in succession and praises them for their justice suggests that Daniel became a legendary figure. This became quite clear when a lengthy epic text was found at Ugarit, written in Ugaritic not later than the fourteenth century BC, singing the praises of a man named Daniel and his son Aqhat. Here, too, Daniel is described as a wise and just judge who defends the rights of widows and orphans. In what is said about his son Aqhat, the theme of the envy of the gods plays a part. In any case we have here a typical example of the way in which a Canaanite heroic saga was transformed in the Old Testament.

At the beginning of this epic we are told how Daniel makes sacrifice to the gods. The purpose of this act we soon find out: he hopes thereby to obtain a male heir. And indeed, the god Baal requests the god El to grant Daniel's supplications. El gives his consent, and in a benediction in which at the same time the duties of the future child are laid down, Daniel is told that his most ardent wish has been fulfilled.

'A scion like unto thy kindred's: who sets up the stelae of thine ancestral spirits in the holy place the protectors of his clan; who frees his spirit from the earth, from the dust guards his footsteps; who smothers the life-force of his detractor, drives off whomever attacks his abode; who takes him by the hand when he is drunk, carries him when he is sated with wine; consumes his funerary offering in Baal's house, even his portion in El's house; who plasters his roof when it leaks, washes his clothes when they are soiled.'

The benediction is fulfilled and Daniel gives eloquent expression to his joy:

Daniel was overjoyed
and his face lit up.
He parted his jaws and laughed,
placed his feet on the footstool,
lifted up his voice and cried:
'Now will I sit and rest
and my soul shall be at ease in my breast!
For a son is born to me like my brethren's,
a scion like unto my kindred's.'

In true epic style Daniel repeats once more the duties his son has to

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fulfil. After the birth of his son, there come into his house the 'Kotharot', the 'daughters of Helal', the 'swallows' – a group of female beings about whom we know nothing. They are wined and dined by Daniel for seven days, whereupon they leave his house again. This is no doubt a ceremony connected with the birth of his son.

Now we hear that Daniel settles down at the entrance to the city, where he administers justice, and that Kothar-Khasis, a double deity, brings a bow as a present for Daniel's son Aqhat.

Straightaway Daniel arose
and seated himself before the gate,
beneath the fence on the threshing-floor.
He judged the cause of the widow,
adjudicating the case of the fatherless.
Lifting up his eyes, he beheld Kothar's approach
through a thousand fields, through ten thousand acres.
And he saw the coming of Khasis,
who came bearing a bow, bearing a cross-bow.
Forthwith Daniel, the prince,
called out loudly to his wife:
'Hearken, lady,
prepare a lamb from the flock
for the gullet of Kothar and Khasis,
for the throat of Hayan the artisan,
give food, give drink to the gods,
honour and worship them.'

There follows the story of Daniel's wife entertaining the two gods, who then depart.

At that moment the goddess of war, Anath, appears and beseeches Aqhat to let her have the bow (which apparently possesses some unusual feature). When Aqhat refuses, the goddess demands the bow more strenuously, promising Aqhat eternal life in exchange:

'Ask for life, O Aqhat, prince,
ask for life and I will give it thee,
for immortality, and I'll bestow it on thee.
I'll make thee count the years with Baal,
with the sons of El shalt thou count the months.
And Baal when he gives life pours out a libation
to the living; he sings and plays for him.
So give I life to Aqhat the prince.'

But Aqhat doubts Anath's promises:

And Aqhat the prince answers:
'lie not to me, O maiden;
for to a hero thy lying is vain.
How can a mortal attain eternal life?
Glass will be poured on my head,
ashes upon my skull;
I shall assuredly die, as all must die.
Yet another word shall I say to thee:
the bow is a bow for heroes!
Are women now to lead the hunt?'

Anath will not yield. She calls on El and obtains permission from him to take action against Aqhat. She fetches one of her servants, Yatpan and informs him of her plan to kill Aqhat.

'I'll make thee like an eagle in my girdle,
like a bird of prey in my game-bag.
As Aqhat sits down to eat,
the son of Daniel to dine,
over him the vultures soar,
a flock of birds of prey shall fly!
I shall be soaring among the eagles,
and will hold thee above Aqhat;
strike him twice upon the crown,
thrice behind the ear,
pour out his blood like sap,
like juice upon his knees!'

And thus it transpires. Yatpan is transformed into an eagle and, surrounded by a flock of birds of prey, kills Daniel's son Aqhat. Daniel is overcome with great grief. He orders his daughter Paghat to saddle his ass.

'Hearken, Paghat who observes the water,
who draws the dew from the barley,
who knows the course of the stars.
Saddle a donkey, harness a jackass,
attach my trappings of silver,
my golden saddlery!'
She heard it, Paghat who observes the water,
who draws the dew from the barley,
who knows the course of the stars.

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Thus she saddled a donkey,
thus she harnessed a jackass,
thus she lifted up her father,
placed him on the back of the donkey,
on the comely back of the jackass.

During a religious ceremony Paghat informs him repeatedly of the death of his son. Daniel contemplates vengeance. The god Baal comes to his aid by identifying among the flock of eagles the one who has devoured his son Aqhat.

Daniel cried out:
'May Baal break the eagles' wings,
may Baal break their pinions.
May they fall down at my feet!
I will split their bellies and look within:
if they contain fat,
or if they contain bones,
I will weep and bury him,
lay him in the hollows of the earth gods!'
Scarce had the words left his mouth,
had his speech left his lips,
than the vultures' wings did Baal break,
Baal broke their pinions,
and they fell down at his feet.
He split their bellies and looked within.
No fat was there,
no bones were there.
And he cried:
'The eagles' wings may Baal mend,
may Baal mend their pinions.
Flee, eagles! flee and fly!'

The same procedure is repeated with Hargab, the 'father of eagles', whose belly also fails to yield the remains of Aqhat. Only Samal, the 'mother of eagles', is found to have devoured Aqhat. Then follow various ceremonies of lamentation, in the course of which Daniel utters a curse upon several cities which are apparently linked with the murder of his son. But so far Yatpan, the chief delinquent, who killed Aqhat, has not been punished. Daniel's daughter Paghat takes it upon herself to avenge her brother by killing Yatpan. Before going into battle she asks her father to bestow his blessing upon her.

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'Bless me that I may go blessed!
Give me your blessing, that I may go protected by thy blessing!
Beatify me, I'll go beatified.
I shall slay the slayer of my brother,
destroy the destroyer of my sibling.'
And Daniel replied:
'With life-breath be quickened, Paghat,
thou who observest the water,
who drawest the dew from the barley,
who knowest the course of the stars.
Destroy the destroyer of thy sibling.'
Paghat bathed in the sea
and put on make-up from the jar.
She rose up, donned a hero's raiment,
put the blade in her sheath,
the sword into a scabbard,
and over all donned a woman's garb.

Paghat makes for Yatpan's house. At this point the clay tablet on which this part of the epic is inscribed breaks off. We can probably assume that there is a fight between Paghat and Yatpan in which the latter is killed.

THE EPIC OF KERET AND HURRIYA

The setting of this epic is the area between the Phoenician coastal city of Sidon and the Sea of Tiberias. This conclusion rests on various place-names mentioned in the text, which however contains no reference to the residence of King Keret, who sets out to free the king's daughter, Hurriya.

At the beginning we are told that King Keret has lost his entire family through illness and natural causes. In deep mourning he lies down to rest, falls asleep and has the following dream: the god El approaches him, inquires into his affliction, and offers him as consolation worldly goods. Keret rejects them and indicates to El that his only wish is to have progeny. El instructs him, while he is still dreaming, to perform ablutions and to make sacrifice. The armament of his troops and a military campaign are also prophesied.

'Then descend, Keret, from the house-tops,
prepare corn for the city,
wheat for the brewery.

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Let bread be baked for the fifth,
food for the sixth month.
Muster the people and let them come forth,
the host of the troops of the people.
Yea, let there come forth the assembled multitude,
thy troops, a mighty force:
three hundred myriads,
warriors without number,
men beyond counting!
They marched in thousands and in myriads,
after two marched two, and after three all of them.
The solitary man closed his house,
the widow hired herself out,
the sick man was carried in his bed.
Even the newly-wed groom went forth,
leading his wife to another,
leading his well-beloved to a stranger.
They covered the fields like the locusts,
like grasshoppers on the edge of the desert.
March for a whole day and then a second,
a third and a fourth,
a fifth and a sixth—
Lo! at the rising of the sun on the seventh day
shalt thou come to Udum the Great,
even to Udum the Mighty.
Now shalt thou attack the towns,
harass the villages,
drive the wood-cutters from the fields,
and the women gathering straw from the threshing-floors.
Drive from the spring the women drawing water,
from the fountain those that fill.
Tarry a whole day and then a second,
a third and a fourth,
a fifth and a sixth,
shoot not thine arrows into the city,
nor cast at it any stone.
And lo, at the rising of the sun on the seventh day
King Pubalu shalt not sleep
for the neighing of his stallion,
for the braying of his ass,
for the lowing of his draught ox,
for the barking of his watchdog.

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Then shall he send two messengers :
'Go unto Keret, to the camp, say :
"A message from King Pubalu :
take silver and yellow gold,
part of the stock and a servant for ever,
three steeds and a chariot
from the homestead of an artisan.
Take, Keret, these gifts of peace,
and leave, O king, my house,
withdraw, O Keret, from my court.
Vex not Udum the Great,
even Udum the Mighty.
Udum is a gift of El,
even a present of the Father of Man."'
Then shalt thou send back the messengers :
'What need have I of silver and yellow gold,
part of the stock and a servant for ever,
a page for the steeds, or
a chariot from the homestead of an artisan?
Nay, what I lack in my house shalt thou give me !
Give me the lady Hurriya,
the fair-born, thy first-begotten,
whose fairness is like unto Anath's,
whose beauty is like unto Ashtoreth's ;
let me bask in the gaze of her eyes,
of her whom in my dream El bestowed upon me,
in my vision the Father of Man,
and let her bear offspring to Keret !

At this point Keret awakens from his dream. He acts as instructed by El. The following events are now described, in the same words as used in the vision. After several refusals by King Pubalu, Keret obtains Hurriya, his beautiful daughter. Subsequently we find Keret back in his homeland. He is visited by several gods with El at their head ; the latter blesses Keret and prophesies the birth of numerous sons. Thereupon the gods return to their tents. Keret requests his bride to prepare a banquet and to invite his most noble subjects, whom he calls 'bulls' and 'gazelles'. And so it happens :

The lady Hurriya heard this,
she prepared the fattest of her fattened calves,
she opened the jars of wine,

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she led to him his 'bulls',
she led to him his 'gazelles',
the 'bulls' of Khubur the Great,
of Khubur the Mighty.
Into the house of Keret they came,
into his dwelling they went,
and approached the tent for the guests.

Later we are told that Keret falls seriously ill. One of his sons appears before him. Keret tells him not to inform his sister that their father is ill. But from her brother's demeanour she notices what has happened, and with the same words that her brother had used she commiserates with Keret.

Now the god El intervenes. In an assembly of the gods he demands that whoever can drive out Keret's disease should come forward:

'Who among the gods can remove the sickness,
can drive out the malady?'
Among the gods none answered him.

El repeats the question seven times, but none of the gods declares himself able to cure Keret's disease.

Now El fashions from clay the magical creature Shu'taqat, who succeeds in defeating Mot, god of death, and in curing Keret.

And so Shu'taqat departed,
and came into Keret's house.
In tears she reached it and entered,
sobbing she entered the innermost part of the house.
She flew over a hundred towns,
she flew over numberless villages.
With a staff she struck the sufferer upon his head,
and repeatedly washed him free of sweat.
She opened his throat for food,
his gullet for eating.
Verily, Mot is broken,
Shu'taqat, behold, is strong.
Then Keret the prince commanded,
raised his voice and cried:
'Hearken, O lady Hurriya!
Slaughter a lamb that I may eat,
a young lamb would I devour!'
And lady Hurriya did hearken,

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she slaughtered a lamb and he ate,
a young lamb and he devoured it.
Behold, one day and then a second;
Keret returned to his old way of life,
sat upon the throne of his kingdom,
upon the dais, the seat of authority.

But Keret is not yet fated to find peace. One of his sons, Yassib, makes an attempt to dethrone him, appearing before him with the words:

‘Hearken carefully, O Prince Keret,
listen and incline thy ear.
Thou has let thy hand fall into mischief,
thou has not judged the cause of the widow,
nor hast thou heard the cause of the wretched,
nor hast thou driven away the oppressors of the poor.
Thou hast not fed the fatherless and widows.
Thou hast become a brother to the sickbed,
a companion to the bed of suffering.
Descend from the throne of thy kingdom, that I may reign;
from thine authority, that I may sit enthroned.’

Keret, however, does not yield.

And Keret, the prince, answered:
‘May Horon break thy head, my son,
May Ashtoreth, mother of Baal, crack thy pate.’

At this point the clay tablet breaks off, so that we do not know how the conflict ended.

Any summary of Canaanite life in the second millennium BC must first stress the fact that the peoples of Palestine-Syria were in a permanent state of unrest as a result of the struggle waged by the great powers for control of this land link between Africa and Asia. After the Hyksos the Egyptians appeared from the south and the Hittites from the north; the rivalry of these two empires lasted until the twelfth century BC. Then came the invasion of the ‘peoples of the sea’ from the Mediterranean. This troubled history, together with the absence of a unifying ideology, may be considered the major reasons for the fact that no large-sized kingdoms or empires emerged at that time in the region.

The political influence exerted by foreign powers helps to explain the

diversity of foreign cultural influences, which we encounter time and again, in art as well as in the fashioning of objects used in everyday life. For evidence of influences from Mesopotamia, one may point to plates 17, 18 and 29. The world of the Aegean islands confronts us in plates 24 (*below*), 41 and 42. Motifs of Egyptian art are to be seen in plates 26, 27, 36 (*above*) and 38. Anatolian influences are apparent in so-called Syro-Hittite art (plate 22). In addition there is obviously also autochthonous Canaanite work, manifest especially in the numerous images of deities.

So long as our knowledge of Canaanite religion came solely from the Old Testament, before the discovery of the documents from Ras Shamra (Ugarit), it was possible to take the view that this remained at the level of a primitive cult. These documents have, however, taught us better. The Canaanites worshipped a highly differentiated pantheon, and although Mesopotamian mythological motifs can occasionally be traced – as, for example, in the description of Baal as the god that dies and is resurrected from the dead – the myths of Ras Shamra (Ugarit) are nevertheless Canaanite in origin. The same applies to the two great epics, that of Daniel and his son Aqhat and that of Keret's journey to woo the beautiful Princess Hurriya. In both cases we can sense the genuine flavour of Palestine–Syria itself.

Let us recall here the great feat of the Canaanites, which we have already discussed in detail: the invention of an alphabetic script, whence our own system of writing is in the last instance derived.

In contrast with the description of the history and religion of the Israelites which follows, we must acknowledge one deficiency in the life of the Canaanites: they lacked the great religious figures which Israel possessed uniquely in her prophets. In direct contrast with the Canaanites, the people of the Old Testament emerge sharply from their ancient Near Eastern background. In the following chapters our main task will be to demonstrate how, side by side with the traditional religious world of the Canaanites, there suddenly appeared in the Old Testament the unique world revealed in the teachings of the great prophets.

IV

ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

1 *The Philistines: Moses and the Judges*

In dealing henceforth chiefly with the history of the Israelite people, we now find ourselves, as has just been pointed out, in a new religious milieu that is unmistakably unique. Although our study is largely historical and archaeological, the nature of the subject makes it necessary to focus attention repeatedly upon the religious aspect of the life of the Israelite people. Especially in the later phases of Israelite history, the preaching of the great prophets had such an immense impact that reference to it becomes obligatory.

The beginnings of Israelite history are shrouded in obscurity, as is the case with all ancient peoples. The accounts given of the life of the patriarchs in Genesis, chapter 11, cannot simply be taken as historical fact. These tales are, however, supposed to be historical: Abraham comes to Palestine from the land of the Aramaeans, and in a solemn ceremony is promised the land by God; his son Isaac marries the daughter of the Aramaean Bethuel; Isaac's son Jacob weds the two daughters of the Aramaean Laban; Jacob's family makes its way to Egypt. But on close examination it is soon evident that this is not historical truth; thus it has long been the tendency to regard these accounts as the invention of a later period, written down by the Israelites to glorify their past.

The opening up of the ancient Near East by archaeological research, and especially the discovery of new documents relating to Palestine-Syria, have compelled scholars to revise their opinions on this question. The stories in Genesis may indeed have appeared much later than the era with which they deal. But the people who compiled them no doubt still had accurate recollections of earlier times; thus we find much in these accounts that could not have been 'invented' later. And there is a great deal which subsequent generations would not have written had

they not felt obliged to represent the past in the way it had come down to them.

The patriarchs are never described as the masters of the country, but always as strangers to it. The land is still under Canaanite occupation; only in later generations is it bestowed upon the people of Israel. In order to be able to bury his wife, Abraham has to buy some land. We may justly ask whether the position of the patriarchs would have been described as so difficult if there had not been compelling historical traditions about the period concerned. If the aim had been to 'invent', the property relationship could have been represented quite differently.

In the Book of Genesis the Hittites are always mentioned, along with other peoples, among the inhabitants of the country. Before the El-Amarna letters were discovered, such a possibility would have appeared fantastic; today we know that Hittite splinter groups advanced far to the south during the fourteenth century – and it is to this period that we must shift Abraham and his descendants. Indeed the king of Jerusalem at that time may well have been a Hittite.

It would be peculiar if the close relationship between the patriarchs and the Aramaeans were to have been invented later. During the period of the Israelite monarchy the Aramaeans, as we shall see, were the fiercest enemies of the Israelites, who suffered more severely from them than from any of their other neighbours. Can one really assume that the ancestors of the Israelites could have been chosen from this people unless this had been made mandatory by the power of ancient tradition?

The same observation may be made in regard to the sanctuaries associated with Abraham and his descendants. These are not the sanctuaries which played such a part in Israel during the ninth and eighth centuries, and the cult of which it might have been tempting to extend retrospectively to earlier times. Apart from Bethel, no sanctuary mentioned in connection with Abraham and his sons plays a particularly important role during the period of the Israelite monarchy. Thus here, too, no attempt has been made to distort history in a tendentious fashion.

And finally, mention must be made of the use of the term for God, El, customary in the narratives of the patriarchs. This is the same term for the deity which we have already encountered in Ugaritic myths and which was common to all Canaanites. From Moses onwards the people of Israel called God Yahweh. The religion of El in Genesis is thus a genuine historical recollection, and was definitely not invented by worshippers of the God Yahweh. The narratives in Genesis are thus neither

mere fiction nor pure truth; they are fiction *and* truth. In histories of literature accounts of this kind are referred to as legends.

But are we dependent merely upon such legends if we wish to obtain authentic information about the times of Abraham? We have one document which from the standpoint of subject-matter and style seems to go back to the El-Amarna period, and that is chapter 14 of Genesis. If this is so, the authenticity of Abraham as an individual, and of his times, is certain. It may be that in this chapter a great deal was added later and serves as embroidery; nevertheless it can be shown that the account must be derived from an earlier document, otherwise it would, for example, be impossible to explain the appellation 'the Hebrew' given to Abraham in verse 13, which occurs only once in the Old Testament but was widespread in the ancient Near East.

Thus a fairly balanced picture emerges of the origins of the Israelite people. The first semi-nomadic tribes must have come from upper Mesopotamia, probably during the reign of the Egyptian pharaohs Amenophis III and IV. Abraham, 'the Hebrew', entered into kinship ties with the Aramaeans; this is in fact the very period when the Aramaeans made their appearance on the stage of world history. As strangers in the land Abraham and his descendants had no fixed abode; we find them now in one place, now in another. And finally some of them at least moved to Egypt, while others probably remained in Palestine. An exodus of this kind was nothing unusual at that time. The semi-nomads of Palestine-Syria were constantly appearing on the Egyptian border and asking to be admitted to a land where there was plenty of corn to attract them. In most cases they arrived with peaceful intentions – Egyptian documents and pictures record this time and again – but sometimes they also appeared with swords in their hands. One thing at any rate is certain: in the following centuries Israelite tradition reckoned with a stay in Egypt as a matter of course. It is difficult, indeed almost impossible, to regard this as the fanciful invention of a later period. The practice of circumcision, which is usual in Israel, may also be attributed to Egyptian influence.

From the fifth year of the reign of the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II (1198–1167 BC) the chroniclers report:

Turbulence has developed along the border areas of the northern territory [i.e. Lower Egypt]; the Pulastu and the Zakeri are laying waste the land;

they fight on land and at sea. They have invaded the estuaries like a horde of savages. Their leaders were slain, and they themselves were taken prisoner . . . I, however, expanded the frontiers of Egypt and struck down all those who had invaded from their lands: the Dayanu, the Zakeri and the Pulastu.

This was a sudden attack launched by the peoples of the sea, who came from the islands of the Aegean and now made an attempt to conquer Egypt from the sea, just as the Hyksos had once done by land. Their attack upon Egypt was unsuccessful. The walls of a temple at Medinet-Habu in Upper Egypt portray these defeated Philistines – for they are the Pulastu mentioned in the Egyptian sources – in conjunction with the inscription: 'The Pulastu are hanged by the power of my father, the god Amun.' As depicted by the Egyptians, the Philistines arrived in ships with their wives and children and ox-drawn carts; it was thus a genuine migration. They are shown as a beardless people with straight noses and high foreheads, wearing on their heads helmets topped by plumes or leaves; these are reminiscent of those worn by the Homeric heroes represented in the illustrations of antiquity.

Although the peoples of the sea failed in their attack on Egypt, they enjoyed a complete success on the Palestinian-Syrian coast. This, too, is recorded by the Egyptian king mentioned above:

The coast in the north was conquered by them; not one of them held his own. From the Hittite land onwards the shore was laid waste. They pitched a camp in the country of the Amurru. They devastated the land and the people. They came with fire as far as Egypt, the Pulastu, the Zakeri . . .

Excavations have corroborated the data given in Egyptian inscriptions. Many cities were destroyed at that time, and in particular the great Hittite Empire seems to have been annihilated as well. But whereas most of the intruders were unable to secure their conquests, especially in the north of Palestine-Syria, those Philistines who invaded the south of the country succeeded in founding a state that survived for several centuries. This is why we come across them in the Old Testament writings. When the Israelites invaded Palestine from the east, the Philistines were already there. Their state was a *pentapolis*: the cities of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron formed the five 'administrative districts' of the country. In the account which follows we shall see how the relationship between Philistines and Israelites became increasingly tense, how the Philistines eventually won the upper hand in the time of Samuel and Saul, and how the Philistine danger was only

eliminated once and for all in the reign of King David. It was then that a final blow must also have been dealt to the national sensibility of the Philistines. From their midst David selected his bodyguard of Kereti (Cherethites) and Peleti (Pelethites) (i.e., Cretans and Philistines); and if in a later period the Assyrian kings continued to speak of a land of the Philistines, they were probably referring only to a small and quite insignificant territory.

Who then were these Philistines who, together with some other kindred tribes, were able to cause such dislocation in the Near East? According to data given by the prophets Amos and Jeremiah, they came from the island of Caphtor, which appears as Captara in ancient cuneiform documents, and is none other than Crete. In this connection a passage in Ezekiel (25: 16 ff.) is of great interest: 'Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites, and destroy the rest of the sea-coast.' And in Zephaniah we read:

For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted. Woe unto you, inhabitants of the sea coast, you nation of the Cherethites (2: 4 f.).

Here the Philistines and Cretans are quite clearly equated; if, however, Caphtor was the homeland of the Philistines, is it not tempting to identify this island with Crete?

Finds of Philistine ceramic ware fit in excellently with the view that the Philistines came from Crete. For in the area of Palestine which was once inhabited by the Philistines, in excavations and even on the ploughed-up surface of occupied mounds we find a painted pottery with a curious form of decoration: time and again there appears a bird like a swan; in addition to this motif there very frequently occur spiral, lozenge and chessboard patterns. These designs are in many respects reminiscent of Cretan-Mycenaean ceramic ware, but are not identical with it. When the Philistines passed through this Cretan-Mycenaean sphere, they must have produced this original ceramic ware of theirs. Its remnants, which come to light today on many occupied mounds in Palestine, are the last testimony to the existence of this vanished people.

The Philistines also stand out from their neighbours in Palestine by the fact that they were uncircumcised. Finally, the ships of the Philistines portrayed in Egyptian sources are clearly distinguishable from those of the Egyptians themselves.

The Philistines may have played an important role in introducing iron to Palestine as a commodity in everyday use. Before the arrival of the Philistines the metal in use was bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. In the First Book of Samuel (13: 19 ff.) we hear that each Israelite had to go down to the Philistines to sharpen his iron implement. The answer to this question throws light on the closely related problem of the Illyrian origin of the Philistines. As is well known, the Illyrians gave the impulse for the so-called Doric Migrations. They advanced in four directions, of which two led them to the Balkans and Greece. It would not be fanciful to suggest that the Philistines were distant offshoots of this Illyrian migration. A characteristic feature of Illyrian place-names is their ending in '-st'. In this connection one can point to a link between the name Pulastu (Egyptian), Peleset (Hebrew) and the Illyrian place-name Palaiste. The chief component of this name (*pal*) is frequently found in Illyrian. There is also the following consideration: in the Old Testament five to six Philistine proper names have been recorded, and for all of them it is possible to provide parallels among Illyrian personal names. There are a number of other pointers to the fact that the Illyrians produced iron. And so we come full circle: we may take it that the Philistines were an Illyrian splinter group who passed through the Cretan-Mycenaean world and introduced iron into Palestine-Syria.

About the religion of this people we can discover little from the few scattered data contained in the Old Testament. At Ashdod there stood a temple dedicated to the god Dagon and at Ekron a sanctuary to Baal-Zebub; one gains the impression that the Philistine religion was soon obscured by Canaanite features. The prophet Isaiah (2: 6) reproaches them for being greatly concerned with occultism.

Although the Philistines soon perished as a people, it was they who gave their name to the land of Palestine.

At about the same time that these storms were sweeping across the coastlands of Palestine-Syria, destroying many ancient kingdoms, another new power was arising in the south-eastern part of the country; not a worldly military power, indeed, but a spiritual and religious one. Moses, one of the great reformers of history, the great law-giver, appeared and sowed the seed of a religion that has continued to develop up to the present day. The figure of Moses has been subject to a great deal of interpretation: indeed, there have been scholars who have sought to deny that he existed at all. It is indeed true that the figure of

Moses has been lavishly embroidered with legend, as is the case with all major historical personages. Thus it came as a great surprise when the discovery of a Babylonian cuneiform tablet revealed the story of the exposure of King Sargon of Akkad, who lived in the third millennium:

Sargon, the mighty king, king of Akkad, am I.
 My mother was a priestess, my father I knew not.
 The brother of my father lived in the hills.
 My city of birth is situated on the banks of the Euphrates.
 My mother conceived me, in secret she bore me.
 She set me in a small basket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid.
 She cast me in the river which had not risen in flood.
 The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the carrier of water.
 Akki, the carrier of water, lifted me out.
 Akki, the carrier of water, took me as his son and reared me.
 Akki, the carrier of water, made me his gardener.
 While I was a gardener, the goddess Ishtar showed me favour . . . and
 I became king.

This is, of course, the model for the well-known story about the exposure of Moses; or rather, both these tales stem from one and the same legend, which we may also find in other cultures, as a typical travellers' saga. The Euphrates became the Nile and the goddess Ishtar the daughter of the Egyptian pharaoh. There is no reason to question the historicity of King Sargon on account of this tale.

Many other miraculous things are related about Moses: the magical staff in his hand, the horns that he is said to have worn as a symbol of his dignity, his unusually great age (like that of his father), and his lonely death upon a high mountain – all these are motifs which the fantasy of later generations devised to embellish the heroes of early times. But on the other hand there are data about Moses' life which make it possible to see in him an entirely historical personage. One should not underestimate the great importance of oral tradition in the ancient Near East. For this reason we can pick out from the apparently almost legendary accounts of Moses' life a good deal of information that deserves to be regarded as sound and credible. In the first place we have his name, which is plainly of Egyptian origin – it comes from the Egyptian word *mesu* (child); then we have the recurring statement that he was in constant opposition to his people. Information of this kind about a folk hero of early times would surely not have been recorded later.

While Moses was living among the Midianites, a people inhabiting

the Egyptian border, at a moment of tranquillity the God of his fathers is said to have manifested himself to him – a God with the then still obscure name of Yahweh (which through wrong vocalization became the Jehovah of the Christians). It was indeed the case that the Canaanite worship of El gave place to the worship of Yahweh.

Belief in the new God was fostered by an event in the life of the Israelite people which must have left a deep impression upon them, although it was not thought worthy of mention in the annals of the Egyptian chroniclers: the crossing of the Red Sea by Israelites fleeing from Egypt, with a detachment of Egyptian troops in pursuit. In the imagination of the Israelites this incident became an unforgettable event. A short 'triumphal song' has been preserved which is said to have been sung after this triumph over the Egyptians:

Praise to Yahweh, most noble is he,
he drove horses and riders into the sea.

According to tradition Moses composed the Ten Commandments. (See plate 47.) There is no reason to reject this tradition unless it should be proved false by firm evidence. In the first three Commandments Moses sets down his experience of the God who revealed himself to him: he is a God who suffers no other gods than himself; he is a spiritual, supernatural God; and he is an ethical God. From this profession of faith in God there follow the demands of the other Commandments, the Fourth to the Tenth, which are concerned with the relationship of man to man. Ideas similar to those contained in this second part of the Decalogue have, it is true, been found in Babylonian and Egyptian documents, and among them are some that date from before Moses' lifetime. Thus we find the following lines in a Babylonian text in which a priest is investigating the possible causes of someone's illness:

Has he split father and son,
split son and father,
split mother and daughter,
split daughter and mother?

Has he not released a prisoner,
delivered a man in bondage,
enabled a prisoner
to see daylight?
Has he entered his neighbour's house,

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approached his neighbour's wife,
shed his neighbour's blood,
seized his neighbour's garment? etc.

Similarly, an Egyptian text contains this confession by a deceased person in the world beyond:

I have not acted wrongly against men,
I have done nothing wicked,
I have done nothing abhorrent to God, *etc.*

It is not surprising that such ideas should also be found elsewhere in the ancient Near East. For the second part of the Decalogue contains injunctions without which no human community could possibly exist. The really important thing, however, is the basis on which these Commandments rest. In Moses' Decalogue they are demanded by the God previously characterized in the first three Commandments.

Moses' spiritual approach to the worship of God is evident from various utterances. Thus six hundred years later the prophet Jeremiah cried to his fellow citizens: 'For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them: "obey my voice . . .; and walk in all the way that I command you"' (7: 22). This idea of a purely spiritual veneration of God also found its way into religious poetry. It is in this light that we must interpret the beautiful words about the true divine service found in Psalm 50: 7 ff.:

Hear, O my people, and I will speak,
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.
I do not reprove you for your sacrifices;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.
I will accept no bull from your house,
nor he-goat from your folds.
For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the air,
and all that moves in the field is mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell you;
for the world and all that is in it is mine.
Do I eat the flesh of bulls,

or drink the blood of goats?
 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
 and pay your vows to the Most High;
 and call upon me in the day of trouble;
 I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

Here we already anticipate the word of the New Testament which Christ speaks to the Samaritan at the well at Shechem: 'God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.'

Moses' concept of God signified a revolution for the world of that time. It was for this reason that he also soon appeared to later generations of Israelites as a hero embellished with horns symbolizing divine power; and in this form he has been represented by one of the greatest Christian artists.

According to tradition Moses was not only a religious reformer but also the first law-giver of his people; all the laws of the five Books of Moses are supposed to stem from him. How much of this tradition can we possibly accept as true? One thing is certain: not *all* the laws can be traced back to Moses; this is evident from the contents and from the constant changes of style that occur. But the tradition certainly contains a kernel of truth. The argument of anachronism no longer holds good today, after the discovery of Babylonian, Assyrian and Hittite laws. These are not only earlier than those of the time of Moses, but are also formulated in the same style as the so-called Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21: 1 ff.). And the Book of the Covenant must have been the work of Moses. The ever-recurring formula is: 'If somebody . . . , then . . . ' 'If a man delivers to his neighbour money or goods to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house, then, if the thief is found, he shall pay double' (22: 7). It was in this traditional style that Moses formulated his laws. How can one explain the fact that the style shows such incontestable parallels with these ancient Near Eastern laws? An important indication is given by the Biblical tradition according to which the Israelites, on their way to Palestine from Egypt, spent a considerable time at a place called Kadesh. But this place also has other names. On one occasion it is referred to as 'source of law', on another as '(place of) litigation'. It seems to have been an ancient spot where judicial proceedings were conducted and sentences passed. It was probably here that Moses became acquainted with the ancient Oriental legal formulation: 'If somebody . . . , then . . . '

Tradition records (Exodus 18: 13 ff.) that, following the advice of his Midianite father-in-law, Moses introduced a new legal system to the Israelite people. As he laid down the law from morning till night, his father-in-law said to him: 'What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?' By administering justice in this way Moses was bound to exhaust himself. He ought therefore to choose trustworthy men from among all the people, and they should administer justice in the first instance; only the really serious matters should be brought to Moses himself. The idea thus was that there should be a reform of judicial procedure that provided for various courts of appeal. The very fact that a Midianite priest, in other words a foreigner, should have given this advice to Moses, and that he should have heeded it, encourages belief in the tradition. For at a later period it would have been impossible for a Midianite, a member of a people with whom Israel was constantly feuding, to be the mentor of the great religious reformer, unless the tradition contained a core of truth.

Moses' successor, Joshua, led the people of Israel across the Jordan into the western part of Palestine. It has already been pointed out that the Biblical account of the seizure of Jericho by Joshua does not correspond to the facts; instead Jericho was finally destroyed two hundred years earlier, and this event was then linked with the immigration of the tribes of Israel. Probably what happened was that the Israelites crossed the river Jordan further to the north, and from there marched through a broad valley directly upon the city of Shechem. This is most likely to have been the place from which they then undertook the conquest of the country. It was only natural that the kings of the Palestinian city-states should have tried to resist the intruders. They formed coalitions: one in the south, another in the north. The southern coalition, which also included the Canaanite king of Jerusalem at that time, was defeated at Gibeon and Aijalon, both situated north-west of Jerusalem. According to legend the sun and the moon stood still until the Israelites had gained a complete victory. A literary work that has since been lost even recorded the words which Joshua is supposed to have spoken on this occasion: 'Continue, O sun at Gibeon and moon in the valley of Aijalon.'

The confederacy of northern city-kingdoms, led by the king of Hazor, also suffered defeat. Although Biblical sources occasionally say that the

native Canaanite population was wiped out in these battles, this is not borne out by the facts. There are a large number of other Biblical passages which clearly show that in many places the old settled population was able to assert itself. They were, of course, unable to offer permanent resistance to the political pressure exerted by their new masters. And as they spoke the same language as their Israelite conquerors, it was only a matter of time before they were absorbed into the Israelite nation. True, those who were defeated politically emerged as the victors from a cultural standpoint. The Israelites who had immigrated from the desert must have felt attracted to Canaanite culture, which had existed for a thousand years and had time and again received enrichment from Egypt, the Aegean world and Babylonia. In the Song of Deborah, which describes the battle between some Israelite tribes and Canaanite princes, the poet (at the end of the song) makes the maid-servant speak the following lines to the mother of a Canaanite prince who is looking for her son:

Are they not finding and dividing the spoil? –
 A maiden or two for every man;
 spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,
 spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered,
 two pieces of dyed work embroidered for my neck as spoil?
 (Judges 5: 30).

These words reflect the desire for such products of Canaanite culture felt by these men of the desert. In the houses they built and the everyday implements they made, the Israelites completely absorbed Canaanite culture; they also adopted the Old Semitic script, which was derived from Sinaitic.

From a religious as well as a cultural point of view the Israelites came under Canaanite influence after their immigration into Palestine: they were attracted by the ancient Canaanite cult of Baal. Holy places on mountain-tops, sacred stones and stone columns, trees and springs were among the locations in which they sought God. Of course, they said that in this way they were serving the God of Israel, but their forms of worship were indisputably those of the Canaanite god Baal. A cult object of this kind from the period of the Israelite monarchy has been found at Ai, north of Jerusalem: an incense-burning altar, doubtless a cult object taken over from the Canaanites, by means of which men

sought to serve their newly-accepted god. The God of Moses seemed to have been forgotten.

That this development was nevertheless checked was due to small groups of men whose objective it was to preserve from 'Canaanization' the belief in the God Yahweh which Moses had introduced; in our terminology we would speak of religious 'orders' or 'fraternities'. Among them were the Nazirites (the name probably means the 'consecrated ones'), who fought their battle for the new belief by adhering to certain 'monastic rules'. The Nazirites had to abstain from drinking wine, and were not allowed to shave the hair of their head, to come into contact with deceased persons, or to eat anything ritually impure. Clearly, these were regulations against deviating from traditional customs. Still more definite in rejecting the Canaanite mode of life were the laws to which the Rechabites adhered. The members of this fraternity had to abstain from drinking wine, were not allowed to build houses or sow seed in the fields, and had to live in tents. Thus here we have an opposition not merely to Canaanite ritual but also to Canaanite civilization as such. It is obvious that little could be achieved by organizations with such an unworldly and 'reactionary' programme.

Of greater significance were the so-called prophets, especially during later Israelite history. These men, too, were bound together in established organizations. Peculiar to them, especially in earlier times, were such eccentric features as ecstasy and ritual frenzy, which enable us to understand why Amos, a later prophet, should have expressly rejected the term 'prophet' as applied to himself. But in the course of time this group of religious zealots split. Figures such as the prophet Elijah and especially those literary prophets whose teachings have been handed down in writing, stand out from those who lived in groups and made prophecies for remuneration. The characteristic feature of the former group – and it is to them that we refer when we speak of 'the prophets' – was their unique attitude to religion and daily life. They were convinced that they were the only true instruments of the living God. They regarded their God as the lord of *all* peoples, and not only as lord of Israel. They were the first chroniclers in the world to have a truly historical outlook, in that they saw a meaning in history: Israel, a people sacred to God, had been chosen to bring the light of a new faith to other peoples. Being this chosen people entailed duties, but not a pretension to dominate others. God speaks to us through nature; he works especially through his never-failing love. The prophets completely rejected the

sacrificial cult, as has already been noted. They were concerned to renew the hearts of men by the word of God. It is above all the social idea which they repeatedly emphasize in their teachings: the struggle against oppression of the weak, widows and orphans, and against immoderate striving after material goods. 'Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land,' cried the prophet Isaiah to his fellow-men (Isaiah 5 : 8). Thus the prophets of the Old Testament were the first men in the world's history to proclaim a social ethic based on a religious idea. The fact that they drew their strength first and foremost from a belief in a better future will be discussed in detail later.

After the conquest of Palestine the tribes of Israel were first of all concerned with establishing their power on a firm basis. It has to be borne in mind that during this early period their history is tribal history. The new religion introduced by Moses no doubt formed a strong unifying bond; but it was never able to amalgamate the 'twelve tribes' into a homogeneous whole, in which the old differences were totally obscured. The historical account given in the Old Testament mentions twelve tribes; in fact the number was greater, but twelve was a sacred number and this gradually prevailed. By the time that the tribes of Israel sought to assert themselves in this way, they already had a fairly long history behind them. Two ancient collections of proverbs, such as may have developed within the individual tribes, to be found at the end of the Books of Genesis and Deuteronomy, tell us something about their fate immediately after the immigration. Thus the tribe of Simeon, which settled in the south, soon disappeared, whereas the tribe of Levi preserved its existence as a priestly caste. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe Manasseh settled in Transjordan. Reuben was soon absorbed by the native Canaanite population. Furthest to the south was the tribe of Judah, whose northern border reached as far as the city of Jerusalem. Adjacent to Judah was the small tribe of Benjamin, while the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh settled north of Benjamin. Further to the north were to be found the tribes of Zebulun, Issachar, Asher and Naphtali. The history of the tribe of Dan is fairly curious, since it first inhabited the south-western corner of the country and then, probably under pressure from the Philistines, abandoned its original settlement and migrated to the north-eastern part of the country. Some of the proverbs mentioned above have a certain originality. The tribe of

Issachar, which had apparently for some time accepted the rule of the established Canaanites, is given a fine characterization in these collections of proverbs (Genesis 49: 14):

Issachar is a strong ass,
crouching between the sheepfolds;
he saw that a resting place was good,
and that the land was pleasant;
so he bowed his shoulder to bear
and became a slave at forced labour.

It is clear that the settlement of the individual tribes did not occur without serious conflicts breaking out between them and the native population. The events that took place have been preserved in the Book of Judges. Except for one or two embroidered narratives, we have no reason to question their accuracy. Thus in the plain of Jezreel a hard battle was fought against native Canaanite princes, about which we have one account in prose and another in verse. Only some of the Israelite tribes complied with the call to arms. 'At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo' battle was joined – one in which, according to the verse account, even the stars finally participated. The tribes of Israel were victorious. This was the last great conflict between them and the native Canaanites.

It was now high time for the tribes of Israel to consolidate their rule in Palestine. Each state as it is formed becomes troublesome to its neighbours, especially if it seeks to assert its new position in a vigorous manner. At this period the tribes of Israel still lacked any central leadership. On various occasions some individual would assume charge of several tribes; he was called a 'judge', and after the fighting was over continued to retain a leading position among the tribes concerned.

In the east the Moabites and Ammonites endeavoured to drive the Israelites back out of Palestine. Both attempts were thwarted by the valour shown by certain tribes – in one case under the command of a man named Ehud and in the other case under that of Jephthah. But now nomadic tribes, at a similar stage of social development as the Israelites had been not long before, pressed in from the desert and contended with them for possession of the land they had acquired. All these wars, from which the Israelites emerged victorious, occupied only a brief period of history. The conflicts with the Philistines were of longer duration. They were as good as inevitable. For two peoples had invaded

Palestine simultaneously with the object of seizing possession of the country – one from the east, the other by sea from the west. In the Book of Judges mention is naturally only made of skirmishes in which the central figure is a man named Shimshon. It is not out of the question that this personage acquired mythological features. Shimshon (from the Hebrew *shemesh* = 'sun') is the 'man of the sun', whose spouse Delilah (can one detect in this name the Hebrew word *lajlā* = 'night'?) cut his hair (= rays of the sun?), whereupon he lost his great physical strength. At first we only hear of skirmishes, but we shall see that these conflicts soon assumed a more serious character.

At one time an attempt was made to set up a local dynasty. Abimelech, a son of the judge Gideon, who had proved himself in battle against the Midianites, killed all his step-brothers at Shechem – or rather, all but one of them who succeeded in escaping. The latter tried in vain, in an address delivered from Mount Gerizim, to persuade the citizens of Shechem to support him. He formulated his appeal as a legend: 'The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them.' His plan failed, and after fighting several battles Abimelech did indeed succeed in becoming king at Shechem. But his kingdom did not last for long. When besieging an adjacent city he was struck and killed by a mill-stone hurled at him by one of the enemy.

At this time serious conflicts also broke out amongst the tribes of Israel themselves. At Gibeā, north of Jerusalem, the inhabitants of the city raped and killed the wife of a member of the tribe of Levi who was passing through the area, and who lived in Ephraim territory. This was the signal for the other tribes to annihilate that of Benjamin, except for a small remnant. So that this tribe should not die out, as the Biblical account tells us, the surviving members were induced to seize wives for themselves. The text ends with the following laconic words: 'In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes' (Judges 21: 25).

2 *Introduction of the Monarchy: Saul, David, Solomon*

What was it that finally led the Israelites to give themselves a new constitution by electing a king? One reason was the example provided by the native Canaanite city-kingdoms. The patriarchal order, based on 'elders', lacked a bureaucracy, the cement of any political order. Moreover, there was the destitution caused by the Philistine wars; the

Philistines advanced far into Israelite territory, leaving troops behind to occupy it. At this time of utter destitution the tribes of Israel had a priestly leader, Samuel. In his wars against the Philistines he was not favoured by good fortune; even the Ark of the Covenant was temporarily lost to the enemy. Thus it came about that one day the people came to Samuel with the following words: '... Now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations' (I Samuel 8: 4). According to the Biblical text Samuel was displeased at this request. Only after a divine revelation: 'For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them', did he decide to yield to his people's request. He made a last effort to change their minds by proclaiming the 'ways of the king' (I Samuel 8: 11 f.):

He will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties; and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be performers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your menservants and maidservants, and the best of your cattle and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves.

The people were not impressed by these words, which afford an illuminating insight into the conventions of monarchy in the ancient Near East. They rejected Samuel's objections with the cry: '... that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles' (I Samuel 8: 20). (In later Biblical accounts, too, this different attitude towards monarchy is expressed time and again. With the reform of the constitution the priesthood appears to have lost much of its power and influence.)

Samuel's choice fell upon Saul, a Benjamite. In the Old Testament there is a fine description of Saul setting out to look for his father's asses and finding a kingdom instead: for during his search he came upon Samuel, who anointed him king. (See plate 47.)

If Saul's kingdom was to serve any purpose at all, he had to banish the Philistine danger. And indeed he succeeded in this; the Philistines were first pushed back to the borders of their own country. But the

threat was not eliminated for good. As the Biblical text puts it laconically: 'There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul' (I Samuel 14: 52).

Soon discord arose between Samuel and Saul. Samuel declared Saul to have forfeited his throne, on the grounds that he had shown leniency towards a conquered enemy; by refusing to banish the vanquished king of the Amalekites, Saul had infringed the supreme command of God. Even if we take account of the religious concepts of the time, it is difficult for us to believe that this can have been the real reason for Samuel's hostility. Indeed, we know that from the very beginning he had been opposed to the idea of introducing a monarchy. And Saul may well have secured for himself an independent position *vis-à-vis* Samuel from the start, so that the latter felt impelled to seize the first opportunity that presented itself to ventilate his antagonism towards Saul. He also rejected every further attempt which Saul made to reach an understanding with him.

It was at this moment that a young man appeared at Saul's court, whose real name we do not know, but who was later called David (= 'the leader'). A description of his reception at the royal court is extant in two versions. According to one he was acceptable to Saul, since by playing on his lyre he diverted him when he was feeling depressed; the other version has it that David owed his position at Saul's court to his courage in the war against the Philistines (his victory over Goliath). Saul's son became his friend, and finally David also became Saul's son-in-law.

David also distinguished himself in later battles against the Philistines; but it is this very fact which seems to have touched off a quarrel with Saul. According to the Biblical text, when the army returned victorious from a battle, the womenfolk welcomed it with the triumphal song:

Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his ten thousands (I Samuel 18:7).

But was this sufficient reason to arouse such hostility on Saul's part against his son-in-law, his son's best friend? We could not form a proper picture of the situation if we did not have at our disposal another Biblical account according to which Samuel, after having fallen out with Saul, is said to have secretly anointed David as king. If Saul knew about this, it is easier to understand his attitude towards David. For Samuel's secret conspiracy with David was nothing less than high treason.

David took to flight. It is significant that the priests of Nob, a small sanctuary north of Jerusalem, should have aided him to flee, and even have offered him consecrated bread in lieu of food. At first David made for Gath, to join the Philistines, not shrinking from seeking refuge among the worst enemies of his people. But the situation proved too dangerous for him there, so he turned to the south of Palestine, rallied around him a mass of discontented elements, and lived the life of a bandit leader; he did not even flinch from blackmailing peaceable citizens.

We shall have another occasion to show that in the Books of Samuel we have quite unique historical source material: the description is vivid, and things are told of the heroes of the various incidents which a later chronicler would certainly have omitted or played down. This is the impression conveyed, for example, by one episode in which the central figure is David, when he was fleeing from Saul in the south of Palestine. David sends his men to a wealthy livestock-owner and asks him for food – adding that he and his followers have hitherto always been very modest in their demands upon this man's property. The role which, in the narrator's opinion, David played is apparent from the livestock-owner's reply: 'Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?' (I Samuel 25: 11). For David this reply was the signal for him to seize by force what he had been denied. But the livestock-owner's wife was cleverer than her husband. She bought David off with a number of gifts and so persuaded him to abandon his life as a bandit. Shortly afterwards the livestock-owner died from a stroke, whereupon David married his widow – who straightaway brought him five other young maidens. In such circumstances it is difficult to believe that David acted justly in all matters. Throughout his whole life there runs, like a continuous thread, the fact that most of his enemies died an unnatural death at a convenient moment, leaving David apparently blameless.

Meanwhile Saul had met his fate. Deserted by most of his people, and increasingly harried by the Philistines, he sought the counsel of his former benefactor, Samuel, who in the meantime had died. At Endor, not far from Tabor, he knew of an old woman skilled in necromancy. This woman was in possession of a talisman with which it was possible to conjure up the dead. At first she was startled when she recognized the king, but was soon able to intimate to him that a spirit was rising from

the earth. She saw, as she said, an old man wrapped in a cloak. From her description (apparently only the witch saw the spirit and could converse with it) Saul recognized Samuel. Samuel reproached Saul for troubling him. The latter explained the cause of his distress. God was no longer responding to his prayers, either through the prophets or through dreams. What was he in his anguish to do against the Philistines, who were becoming ever more powerful? Samuel remained cool. Once again he reproached him for having spared the life of the king of the Amalekites and then declared to Saul that his end was approaching.

In the meantime the Philistines had penetrated as far as the Jordan. On Mount Gilboa, not far from the ancient city of Beth-Shan, Saul and his son Jonathan fell in battle against the Philistines, who suspended Saul's dead body from the city wall of Beth-Shan. The Biblical text quotes a song taken from a collection of which the rest has been lost. It describes movingly the heroic end of Saul and his son:

Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.

Ye mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew or rain upon you,
nor upsurging of the deep!
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,
the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan turned not back,
and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!
In life and in death they were not divided;
they were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
who clothed you daintily in scarlet,
who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

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How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle,
Jonathan lies slain upon thy high places.

(II Samuel I: 19-27).

After the tragic death of Saul, David first became king over the tribal area of Judah, the capital of which, Hebron, was located in southern Palestine. In the rest of Israel Saul's son Eshbaal acceded to power. He did not rule for long, but was assassinated within a few years.

Thereupon emissaries of the other tribes appeared and offered David the royal crown over the united kingdom of Israel. Thus in about 1000 BC David became autocrat. The fact that it was at all possible to found such a state in Palestine-Syria was doubtless due in large measure to the general situation in the area. About 1200 BC Egypt entered upon a lengthy period of political and military stagnation. The great Hittite Empire had disappeared. Although Assyria had started to revive, this process had not advanced far enough to have any effect upon Palestine-Syria. Thus none of the great powers was sufficiently strong to renew the age-old struggle for this region. Undoubtedly this resulted in a favourable situation for David, since the kingdom he had founded hardly suffered at all from foreign attack.

David's first act as king was to set up a new capital – for Hebron was situated too far to the south for a state that extended as far as the Lebanon Mountains. His choice fell upon the ancient city of Jerusalem, which had existed since the third millennium and had, as we have seen, played an important part during the period of the El-Amarna letters. Strategic motives were probably not paramount in this decision; David would have been more concerned about the feelings of most of the tribes. Jerusalem was not located in the territory of the tribe of Judah to which David belonged, but in that of Benjamin; thus he could not be reproached for putting dynastic interests before national ones. Jerusalem was inhabited by a native Canaanite population and would not open its gates to David voluntarily; it had to be taken by storm.

The union of the tribes of Israel into one kingdom, under the leadership of such an energetic ruler as David, could not fail to arouse mistrust in neighbouring states. Immediately new wars began with the Philistines, from which David emerged completely victorious. He was equally successful in his conflicts with his neighbours to the east and north-east: the Ammonites and Moabites, and the Aramaean state of Damascus.

Having secured his kingdom against external attack, David consolidated it internally by setting up a bureaucracy. He established offices for the army, for religious cult, for the judicial administration, and for labour services. He also formed a bodyguard, composed of none other than Philistines, the arch-enemies of Israel. He knew – and in this history has confirmed his wisdom – that these homeless men would serve him loyally.

It is difficult to ascertain whether David already had in mind the building of a temple in Jerusalem. He is said to have been prevented from doing so by opposition among the prophets; on the other hand, it is surely true that he carried the ancient sacred cult object, the Ark of the Covenant, in a solemn procession to Jerusalem and there rendered sacrifice on the huge rock – the one on which his son was later to erect a temple, and where the Omar Mosque stands today.

The last phase of David's reign was clouded by dissension within his own family. Some of his sons inherited his fiery temperament. Eventually one of them, Absalom, conspired against him, and as a consequence David was compelled to flee temporarily across the Jordan. He did, however, succeed in crushing this plot, whereupon he returned to his capital at Jerusalem. In the very north of his kingdom a new rebellion flared up, but after heavy fighting he was able to master the situation.

The accession to the throne of David's son Solomon is described in the first chapter of the First Book of Kings. This account is the only one of its kind, and has not yet been substantiated from any Near Eastern source. Events are presented in a lively and graphic manner – it is as though we could see all the principal characters before us. David had to take a decision in respect of his succession, which was disputed on account of his many wives; this practice was customary at the time.

At David's court there were two parties, each of which wanted to place its own candidate on the throne. One party interceded for Solomon, the son of Bathsheba. The leading personalities of this group included Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest and Benaiah the commander of the bodyguard. The candidate of the other party was Adonijah, son of Haggith (a younger brother of Absalom, who had lost his life in his rebellion against his father). Adonijah apparently revealed his intentions too soon. While David was still alive he acted in a grand manner, procuring for himself chariots and horses as well as a bodyguard of fifty men, who accompanied him on his travels. One day, when

Adonijah had invited his retinue to a banquet near the so-called 'serpent stone' (a little to the south of what is now the spring of the Virgin Mary), the rival party decided that the hour had come for them to act. As had previously been arranged, Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, was the first to enter David's sick-room. She reminded the king that he had always considered Solomon as his successor, yet now Adonijah had been made king (Bathsheba was deliberately exaggerating in order to incite David; there was no question in fact of the opposition party having proclaimed Adonijah king). At a given signal Nathan the prophet also appeared before the aged prince and reported on the matter in the same distorted manner. This made a great impression upon David. He gave orders that Solomon should be anointed king of Israel immediately, rather than await his death. For this purpose Solomon was placed on David's mount and taken to the spring Gihon (nowadays known as the spring of the Virgin Mary), escorted by his entire retinue as well as by David's bodyguard. At the spring of Gihon stood the ancient sacred tent containing the Ark of the Covenant. Zadok the priest took from the tent the horn of oil and anointed Solomon king. Thereupon the people began to cry: 'Long live King Solomon!', and escorted the new ruler back to Jerusalem in a triumphal procession.

The opposition party, which had assembled at the 'serpent stone', threw in its hand. Adonijah asked Solomon for mercy, which the latter granted – for the time being. But even on his death-bed David urged his successor to be sure to avenge himself upon his enemies – a sorry aspect of the story, although this idea was in conformity with the views held at the time in the Near East. Solomon was to act on the same principles later.

David's character has many bright as well as dark facets. He doubtless had a vigorous nature and was not always fastidious in his choice of means to obtain his objectives. There is no excuse for his very questionable attitude towards Uriah the Hittite. Intervention by the priests drew him into political intrigues at an early age, and he found himself caught up in situations which he could not deal with properly on his own. The fact that he finally gained the upper hand and became king over the whole of Israel was undoubtedly due to his energy and single-mindedness of purpose. In addition, he showed greater prudence in political matters than Saul, as is clearly evident from the fact that he was always concerned to ensure good relations with the priestly caste. Thus he stands before us as a real prince of the ancient Near East, as the founder of a

well-organized and powerful kingdom such as Palestine-Syria had not yet known. In Old Testament history, however, David's tribe was linked with the idea of the coming Messiah, and thus this harsh warrior king became 'David the psalmist'.

David was succeeded on the throne of Israel by his son Solomon. One can hardly imagine a greater contrast than that between him and his two predecessors. Whereas Saul and David were warlike figures, Solomon was rather what one might call a 'wealthy heir', although he did not think of regaining the heritage of his ancestors. He carried out a reform whereby his kingdom was divided into twelve prefectures, each of which in turn was obliged to maintain the royal court for one month; this will hardly have earned him the goodwill of his subjects. He further developed the bureaucracy originally created by David. It was in keeping with his fondness for ostentation that he should also like horsemanship. The Biblical story that he built stables at Megiddo and elsewhere has been confirmed by excavations; compounds of this kind have indeed been discovered at Megiddo.

Probably the most important event in foreign policy during Solomon's reign was his marriage to a daughter of the pharaoh. The name of his father-in-law is not mentioned in the Biblical account, but it can only have been one of the last two kings of the Twenty-first Dynasty. The Biblical text goes on to record that the Egyptian king had taken the city of Gezer, in south-western Palestine, and given it to Solomon on his marriage to his daughter. This information is significant: it shows that the old Egyptian design upon Palestine-Syria had never quite been abandoned; time and again we come across attempts by Egypt to gain a firm footing in the area. Among Solomon's foreign policy moves was the despatch of a fleet to southern Arabia to fetch gold and sandalwood; he is said to have undertaken this journey himself, together with Hiram of Tyre.

The most important act of Solomon's reign was undoubtedly the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. A Biblical tradition (II Samuel 7) has it that David already planned to erect a temple in Jerusalem, but had been dissuaded from doing so by the words of Nathan the prophet: 'God has hitherto always dwelt in a tent'. The prophets' attitude is unlikely to have changed under David's successors either. Since the Temple was built during his reign, Solomon apparently disregarded the feelings of the prophets, and in doing so no doubt had the approval of

the priests. For antagonism always existed between prophets and priests.

Solomon's Temple must have been built at the spot where the Omar Mosque stands today, upon a huge rock which was probably a cult centre from very ancient times onwards. As the Israelites of that era lacked sufficient artistic prowess to erect a splendid monument in accordance with Solomon's intentions, the king turned to Hiram of Tyre. In exchange for the cession of twenty places in Galilee the latter procured for him gold and cedar-wood and also made arrangements for the despatch of artists and architects. (See plate 46.)

The building that eventually arose on the site, after seven years' work, was 130 ft. long, 32½ ft. wide and 49 ft. high. It had three storeys which broadened out towards the top. The Temple was divided into three parts: portico, temple chamber, and holy of holies; around it were side-chambers to which access was gained through a door. The building was splendidly decorated: parts of the walls were covered with gold plate and embellished with carvings of flowers. In front of the porch stood two columns. The temple chamber was furnished with magnificent cult objects, as a result of the assistance given by artists from Tyre. Among them was, for example, the so-called 'sea', a kind of cauldron supported by twelve bronze oxen; there were also twelve movable chairs and a number of implements used in the ritual. In the most holy place stood the Ark of the Covenant, a relic of the desert period of Israelite history; it was overshadowed by two huge cherubs, whose wings measured more than 8 ft. across.

On its completion the Temple was consecrated with great solemnity. The address which Solomon delivered on this occasion, as the Biblical account (I Kings 8: 14 ff.) suggests, is clearly a justification of the fact that the God of Moses, who had been conceived of as a spiritual being, had now had a proper dwelling-place built for him. One can reconstruct from Solomon's speech the various opinions that existed on this question at the time. Was he really aware of the fact that his Temple, adorned with Canaanite decoration and cult objects, was unsuited to serve as the sanctuary of a God who was thought of in purely spiritual terms? But Jerusalem was situated on the great highway that ran from north to south along the ridge of the mountain chain; the caravans that passed along this route must have looked with amazement upon this building and carried tidings of it to distant lands.

The Temple was not the only edifice which Solomon erected in his capital. There was also the so-called House of the Forest of Lebanon,

162 ft. 6 in. long, 81 ft. broad and 49 ft. high, the roof of which was supported by three rows of cedar pillars, numbering forty-five in all. Two hundred gold shields were ranged inside the building. The Hall of Pillars was of the same dimensions. For the ceremonial administration of royal justice a special building known as the Hall of Judgment was erected. Naturally Solomon also built a royal palace in accordance with the custom among rulers in the ancient Near East.

In addition to his love of splendour and his passion for building, Solomon seems to have had a high esteem for literature. According to tradition he excelled particularly in the composition of proverbs. 'He also uttered three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall' (I Kings 4: 32 ff.). Eventually the whole Book of Proverbs was attributed to Solomon.

As well as artistic and literary inclinations he also had a partiality for beautiful women. According to the Bible, some one thousand of them are said to have passed through his harem.

3 *The Partition of the Kingdom of Israel*

While Solomon was still alive his way of life seems to have aroused opposition, which was headed by a group of prophets. One of the leaders of this group was Jeroboam (later to become first ruler of northern Israel after the partition of the kingdom); he was forced to flee to King Shishak of Egypt. In the Biblical account this rebellion against Solomon is linked with the great number of foreign wives possessed by the king. The group of prophets who led the opposition would doubtless have put up with his large harem, but what they could not abide was the fact of the Canaanite cults of foreign gods which these women brought with them, and to which they adhered with all the tenacity that women show in religious matters. Among these gods were Ashtoreth, known to us from Ugaritic myths, and Chemosh, god of the Moabites. This signified not only a 'Canaanization' of the Yahweh religion but the support of foreign cults – and thus apostasy from the God of Moses.

After Solomon's death, which probably occurred about 930 BC, David's kingdom was partitioned. At the very same time as representatives of the various tribes came to David at Hebron to offer him the crown of all Israel, Solomon's son Rehoboam had to go to Shechem, where representatives of the ten northern tribes were assembled. They

requested him to ease the heavy yoke which his predecessor Solomon had imposed upon them. Rehoboam did not follow the counsel of his senior advisers that he should first of all give in and so save his throne. Instead he replied with the rash words:

My father made your yoke heavy,
but I will add to your yoke;
my father chastised you with whips,
but I will chastise you with scorpions (I Kings 12: 14).

As a consequence of this all the tribes except Judah and Benjamin rebelled against him. This revolt was introduced with the password:

What portion have we in David?
We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.
To your tents, O Israel!
Look now to your own house, David!

An attempt by Rehoboam to suppress the revolt failed.

If we ask ourselves why the northern tribes broke away, it is first necessary to bear in mind the heavy burdens which David and especially the extravagant Solomon had imposed upon the people, above all upon those of the north. Ancient tribal antagonisms may have also played a part, as well as the intermingling of the Israelites with elements of the conquered Canaanite population. Furthermore, Moses's personality and achievements could not maintain their effect over the centuries. To what extent the inner core of this new belief had already been eaten away can be seen from the fact that the Temple at Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant no longer had any attraction for a large number of northern tribesmen. There were, of course, also some who were pained at the partition of the kingdom. Even two hundred years later the prophet Isaiah declared to Ahaz: 'The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah' (7: 17).

The consequences of partition for Israel's foreign relations soon made themselves felt. Whereas Solomon had been the son-in-law of the Egyptian king, in Rehoboam's reign the Egyptian pharaoh Shishak invaded the northern and southern kingdoms. This was, however, the last time for two hundred years that Egyptian troops were to stand upon Palestinian soil.

Simultaneously there appeared on the scene the Aramaeans of

Damascus, whom David had already defeated once. A conflict between the northern and southern kingdoms gave them the pretext to invade the north and lay waste large areas of the country.

Solomon's son Rehoboam held sway only over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but the northern kingdom was ruled by Jeroboam I. According to the Bible a prophet during Solomon's reign had already marked him out as future king of the north. When he acceded to the throne he had reason to fear that the newly-built Temple at Jerusalem, in which the Ark of the Covenant was kept, might exert an attraction for his subjects politically as well as spiritually. He therefore erected two new sanctuaries on the southern and northern borders of his kingdom, set up a statue of a calf, and referred to it as the God who had led Israel out of Egypt. What now remained of the spiritual God of Moses? It was only to be expected that Jeroboam should incur the enmity of the prophets.

It was bad enough that David's great kingdom should be partitioned; but soon war broke out between the two states as well. The attack was begun by the north, whose king, Baasha, apparently wanted to reunite the two parts of the kingdom by force. In his predicament King Asa of the south took a fatal step. He sent an appeal for aid to the Aramaeans of Damascus, the Israelites' old enemies. He used the traditional formulae employed in the Near East in antiquity when concluding treaties: 'Let there be a league between me and you, as between my father and your father: behold, I am sending you a present of silver and gold; go, break your league with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me.' Benhadad I, the Aramaean ruler, responded at once to this distress call; he invaded the northern kingdom and for the time being Asa was saved.

After several rulers had usurped the throne of the northern kingdom, a new dynasty came to power at the beginning of the ninth century founded by an officer named Omri. He must have been more important than is suggested by the few items of information contained in the Old Testament sources, for even after his death the northern kingdom was called 'the land of Omri' after him in Assyrian royal inscriptions. Hitherto Shechem and Tirzah had been the capitals of the northern kingdom, but Omri built a new residence north-west of Shechem, to which he gave the name of Shomron (Samaria).

Omri's son and successor, Ahab, was married to Jezebel, daughter of

the king of Tyre. The two figures of calves which Jeroboam I had erected in the two sanctuaries of the northern kingdom already bore witness to the decline of the new creed which Moses had introduced in Israel; and during Ahab's reign there was a veritable persecution of worshippers of Yahweh. That the latter finally triumphed over the tribulations inflicted upon them was doubtless due to the prophet Elijah. The struggle he waged can not have been an easy one. King Ahab was apparently indifferent to religious matters, but his queen Jezebel made up for him in fanaticism. In the end Elijah fled from her into the desert, to the sacred mountain where Moses had once been accorded the great revelation. The description of the way in which God appeared to Elijah is most engaging. While the latter was waiting for God to make himself manifest, a mighty storm broke out, followed by an earthquake. But God was not to be found in either of these phenomena. Only when it was completely calm did God speak to him. This is a quite unique renunciation of the naturalistic concept of the deity. As a result of this experience Elijah was imbued with fresh courage, returned to his homeland and succeeded in drawing to his side the vacillating King Ahab, who now came out against the cult of Baal.

Ahab and his country were soon to have other worries than internal religious conflicts. At Damascus the energetic King Benhadad II had come to power; resuming the policy of his predecessors, he made repeated incursions into the northern kingdom. It was only with difficulty that Ahab managed to withstand this pressure. Shortly afterwards the northern kingdom of Israel and Damascus were jointly threatened by a new danger which forced them, at least for a while, to cease their feuding and to join forces in resisting an external enemy. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (858-824) had appeared in Syria. In his annals he records that in 853 BC he annihilated a coalition at Qarqara in northern Syria, and mentions among the leaders Benhadad II of Damascus and Ahab of Israel. The Old Testament says nothing about the clash with the Assyrians; and we do not know whether Ahab volunteered to take part in this battle or whether he was forced to do so by Benhadad II. But when the Assyrians withdrew fresh fighting broke out between Ahab and the Aramaeans, in which Ahab was killed. In former times a ruler of southern Israel would, in emergency, have appealed to the Aramaeans of Damascus for help against the northern kingdom; but in this final battle Ahab called upon Jehoshaphat, king of the southern realm, to be his ally.

The prophet Elijah must have died around this time. His end is described fancifully by legend: he is said to have gone to heaven in a fiery chariot. His personality must have made a great impression upon his contemporaries, since for centuries his return was awaited (Malachi 4: 5) and this hope found an echo in the New Testament (Matthew 11: 14).

The military alliance between the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel also played a role in a war fought on another front. At Dibon, east of the Jordan, a stele has been found bearing an inscription of King Mesha of Moab, well known from the Old Testament. Written in Old Semitic script and Moabite language, this inscription records the pre-history of the conflict described in the Book of Kings (II Kings 3: 4 ff.) – a campaign in which King Jehoram of northern Israel and King Jehoshaphat of southern Israel were engaged against Moab:

I am Mesha, son of Chemosh, king of Moab, the Dibonite – my father reigned over Moab for thirty years, and I reigned after my father – who made this high place for Chemosh in Qarhoh . . . because he saved me from all the kings and caused me to triumph over all adversaries. As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years, for Chemosh was angry at his land. And his son followed him and he also said: 'I will humble Moab.' In my time he spoke thus, but I have triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel hath perished for ever.

After these words of introduction Mesha describes how he reconquered the territory he had lost to the northern kingdom.

This gave King Jehoram and King Jehoshaphat the opportunity to fight a war of revenge against Moab. But after initial successes it ended with the defeat of both Israelite armies, which according to the explanation given in the Bible was due to the fact that at the height of his distress Mesha sacrificed his son and successor to the Moabite Chemosh. Thereupon a great fury came over the Israelites, who withdrew from the battle and returned to their own country. This account suggests that the ancient concept of a national god was still alive: in Moab Chemosh is more powerful than Yahweh.

Ahab's son Jehoram seems to have established a better relationship with the Aramaeans of Damascus. His father Ahab had finally agreed with Benhadad II, the Aramaean king, that Israel should be allowed to set up trade centres in Damascus and the Aramaeans to do likewise in

Samaria. This may be the explanation for a most extraordinary deed performed by the prophet Elisha, Elijah's successor. In the Second Book of Kings (8: 7 ff.) it is recorded that Benhadad II had been taken ill and that Elisha had left for Damascus at the same time. When Benhadad II heard of his arrival in Damascus, he sent Hazael to ask Elisha whether he would recover from his illness. To Hazael's question Elisha gave a strange answer: 'Go, say to him: "You shall certainly recover; but the Lord has shown me that he shall certainly die."' As he said this Elisha began to weep. The astonished Hazael inquired the reason for his tears. And Elisha replied: 'Because I know the evil that you will do to the people of Israel . . .', ending with the words: 'The Lord has shown me that you are to be king over Syria.' Now Hazael knew what to do: on the following day he strangled Benhadad II and made himself king of Damascus.

If we ask what may have motivated the prophet Elisha to effect such a change of dynasty, we have but one explanation: he saw that a friendly relationship between the courts of Samaria and Damascus was likely to lead to an even greater penetration by foreign religious ideas, and he preferred to see his people face death and distress than allow the belief in Yahweh to be endangered. As we shall see, the great prophets later thought differently about these matters.

After the change of dynasty in Damascus it was only a question of time before groups of prophets also made attempts to exterminate the hated dynasty of Omri. With Hazael's accession to the throne in Damascus fighting broke out afresh between Israel and the Aramaeans. Once again Jehoram and Ahaziah, respectively kings of northern and southern Israel, joined forces in battle and took an enemy fortress. In the course of these engagements King Jehoram was wounded and, accompanied by Ahaziah, went to recuperate at the fortress of Jezreel in the plain of Megiddo. Thereupon Elisha's group of prophets saw that the hour had come for them to overthrow the Omri dynasty by force. A disciple of Elisha appeared in the camp and in confidence informed the commander-in-chief, Jehu, that Yahweh had chosen him (Jehu) king over Israel. When Jehu reported this to the other commanders they immediately paid homage to him as their new ruler. His first act was to exterminate all Omri's relatives.

There is no lack of drama in the circumstances attending the fall of the Omri dynasty. The Bible describes graphically how Jehu immediately hastened in his war-chariot to Jezreel where the wounded King

Jehoram was staying. The watchman on the tower reported that the war-chariot was approaching. Jehoram sent a horseman to meet him, but he was prevented by Jehu from bringing back any message; the same happened to another horseman whom Jehoram sent out. At this Jehoram became suspicious; he drove out to meet Jehu and was killed by him. By the time he realized that treachery was afoot, it was too late. Ahaziah, king of the southern kingdom, also met his death while in flight. Jezebel, mother of the murdered King Jehoram, and daughter of a king of Tyre, knew that her hour had come, but was determined to die like a queen. She made up her face, donned jewellery, and cried out to Jehu as he approached: 'Is it peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?' (Zimri, a king who had ruled before the Omri dynasty, had killed his predecessor Ela and then ascended the throne himself.) Jehu ordered her to be thrown out of the window. Following this, he had all the king's sons in Samaria killed, and all the priests who had served foreign gods were likewise executed. Ahaziah's brothers, too, were put to death. The massacre extended to the southern kingdom, where Athaliah, a daughter of Jezebel, seized power and had the entire royal family killed. Only Joash, a son of Ahaziah, was saved by the intervention of the priests, who concealed him.

The restoration of this prince, Joash, to the throne of his fathers took place seven years after Jehu's rebellion. The high priest of the Temple at Jerusalem called the commanders of the Philistine bodyguard, showed them the prince in hiding, and persuaded them to swear fealty to him. At the next changing of the guard on the sabbath these mercenaries occupied the Temple, and while the high priest invested the prince with the insignia of royal dignity (diadem and armlet) the multitude voiced the traditional cry: 'Long live the king!' Athaliah was executed, as were the priests of Baal whom she had brought to Jerusalem. The Biblical account ends: 'So all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet . . .' (II Kings 11:20).

Jehu's rebellion was the bloodiest episode in Israelite history, and if—leaving aside the question of the methods applied—we ask ourselves whether it was successful, the answer must be in the negative. True, the open worship of Baal was abolished. But can the events that took place in the sanctuaries of the land really be considered proper worship of the God Yahweh, as Moses and the prophets had demanded? It was in fact no more than a purely external cult, which assumed the same forms as in past and present Canaanite sanctuaries. And thus it is understandable

that one hundred years later the prophet Hosea should have turned away from these events in horror.

In foreign affairs, too, the change of government brought no alteration in the situation of the northern Israelite kingdom. Time and again the Assyrian kings appeared in Syria. The rulers of northern Israel were faced with the choice of either fighting the Assyrians as vassals of the Aramaeans of Damascus or of paying tribute to the Assyrians, thus once again falling out with the Aramaeans. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser III also records a tribute rendered by 'Jaua [Jehu] of the land of Omri'. (What an irony that the Assyrian king should call Jehu's country after the man whose dynasty he had just exterminated!) The subjugation of Jehu has been immortalized upon an Assyrian monument (plate 53).

During the reign of Jeroboam II (783-743) the northern Israelite kingdom experienced a happier time. The Aramaean danger had receded as a result of the wars which Damascus was obliged to fight against the Assyrians, and the latter did not appear in Palestine-Syria again for a long time.

It was in this period, when Israel was feuding with the Aramaeans and the Assyrian armies were invading the land, that the earliest literary prophets, Amos and Hosea, were active. These were the first men who not only proclaimed the divine word but who also felt it to be their sacred duty to interpret and criticize contemporary events. Amos lived to see the distress that resulted from the Aramaean invasions. Basing himself upon his belief that the God of Israel was also the lord of all people, he announced to the Aramaean state of Damascus that it would shortly be punished:

'For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron. So I will send a fire upon the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the strongholds of Benhadad. I will break the bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven, and him that holds the sceptre from Beth-eden; and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir' (Amos 1: 3-5).

We need not believe that this was a *vaticinium ex eventu*. We can see time and again that the prophets judged the course of events correctly. The fate which Amos had predicted for the Aramaeans he prophesied for other neighbours of Israel, and finally also for his own people: at first for the southern kingdom (his own homeland) and then the northern kingdom as well.

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Amos was firmly convinced that in his teaching he was following God's commandments directly. He expressed this inner drive graphically in the following passage :

Do two walk together
unless they have made an appointment?
Does a lion roar in the forest
when he has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from his den
if he has taken nothing?
Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth
when there is no trap for it?
Does a snare spring up from the ground
when it has taken nothing?
Is a trumpet blown in a city
and the people are not afraid?
Does evil befall a city
unless the Lord has done it?
Surely the Lord God does nothing
without revealing his secret
to his servants, the prophets.
The lion has roared ;
who will not fear?
The Lord has spoken ;
who can but prophesy? (Amos 3 : 3-8).

When he was finally driven from the sanctuary at Bethel he hurled harsh words at his opponents. He did not, he said, belong to the guild of professional prophets, but God had taken him from his flock and ordered him to prophesy against his own people.

It has already been pointed out that the prophet Hosea disapproved of Jehu's revolution in 842, whereby he destroyed the Omri dynasty in the northern kingdom. He expressed this sentiment in a way characteristic of the prophets. When his wife gave birth to a son he said to her : 'Call his name Jezreel ; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel' (Hosea 1 : 4). (Jezreel was the name of the royal pleasure place where the last ruler of the Omri dynasty was killed by Jehu.) Symbolic naming in this manner was a popular form of prophecy. The event to which Hosea refers must have evoked particularly unpleasant memories, for Hosea was in fact a person to whom the highest law was

compassionate love. In his unchanging love for his faithless wife he became convinced that God also had to love his people despite their idolatry and apostasy. Like Isaiah and Jeremiah later, Hosea condemned the kings of Israel for intervening in the great powers' struggle for Palestine-Syria. He compared his fellow citizens to artless doves who on one hand summoned the Egyptians to their support and on the other made the pilgrimage to Assur.

4 *Decline of the Two States of Israel*

Of the successors to Jeroboam II scarcely any died a natural death; one usurper overthrew the other and assumed his mantle. When the energetic Assyrian ruler Tiglath-Pileser III appeared in Syria in 732 BC, King Menahem of northern Israel immediately submitted to his authority – one jewel among the many which the Assyrian collected. The latter took up his ancestors' traditional policy of fighting their way into Egypt. The Egyptians for their part sought to mobilize the numerous city-kings of Palestine-Syria against the Assyrians. Thus the small states of the area oscillated to and fro between Assyria and Egypt, and each of them possessed a pro-Assyrian and a pro-Egyptian party. In 725 BC, while the last king of Israel, Hosea, was negotiating with the Egyptians, the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V invested Samaria; the city fell in 722, during the reign of his successor Sargon II. The leading elements of the population were deported to Mesopotamia, where they disappeared without trace. Foreign peoples began to settle in the territory of northern Israel and intermarried with the native Israelites; the Samaritans resulted from this union.

The collapse of the northern kingdom naturally caused consternation in the southern kingdom as well. The prophet Isaiah expressed this feeling eloquently:

Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,
and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty,
which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine!
Behold, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong;
like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest,
like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters,
he will cast down to earth with violence.
The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim
will be trodden under foot . . . (28: 1-4).

Judah had now become the immediate neighbour of the Assyrian Empire. It was only a question of time before this rump state also faced the question of vassaldom or annihilation. This dilemma was in the mind of the prophet Micah when he exclaimed, at the conclusion of his lamentation for the fall of Samaria:

All this is for the transgression of Jacob, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem? (1: 5).

Even before the destruction of Samaria Judah had been affected by the chain of circumstances that led to the fall of the northern kingdom. When the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III appeared in Syria in 732 BC, a coalition was formed against him under King Rezin of Damascus and King Pekah of northern Israel. They both sought to compel King Ahaz of southern Israel to join their coalition, and to this end invaded his territory. In his despair Ahaz sent to the Assyrian king an embassy laden with lavish gifts and appealed to him for aid. This brought about a sharp conflict between him and the prophet Isaiah, who knew that the king of Assyria would take the field against both his enemies in any case; what then, he argued, was the purpose of establishing a link with Assur? 'It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass' that which the two kings were contriving against Ahaz. All that Ahaz had to do was to maintain the firmness of his faith: 'If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established' was the prophet's watchword. But Ahaz, who had apparently taken action already, rejected Isaiah's counsel. This led Isaiah to the climax of his preaching: 'Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.' Ahaz evaded the issue; he would not tempt God. Thereupon Isaiah uttered his famous messianic words, that a Virgin would conceive and bear a son, and that before the child should know how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the kings that he abhorred would be destroyed. The prophet was proved right. After a short while the coalition succumbed to the king of Assyria, but Ahaz appeared before him in Damascus. The reception which the alien conqueror gave him must have made a very strong impression upon him, for he introduced into Jerusalem the model of an Assyrian altar, and had it erected in the Temple of Yahweh. (See plate 53.)

The erection of a foreign altar in the Temple of Jerusalem by King Ahaz may have provided the final impulse for a religious reform carried out

by his successor Hezekiah (727-699). He eliminated the sanctuaries on the mountain peaks, the stone columns and carved wooden poles, as well as a snake idol which had been venerated for a considerable length of time. It was not against a genuine Baal cult that Hezekiah's reform was directed, for such a cult had ceased to be practicable ever since the days of Jehu. Hezekiah's action in itself shows how far 'Canaanization' of the Yahweh religion had already advanced.

During the first part of Hezekiah's reign relations with neighbouring states were peaceful. As the Assyrian kings expanded their empire in all directions, they had to quell repeated revolts by the peoples they had brought under their sway; this meant that they could not maintain strong permanent forces in the conquered parts of Palestine-Syria. Their apparent military weakness may have prompted the continual rebellions throughout the country, most of which were secretly engineered by Egypt. The prophet Isaiah's warnings against relying on Egypt - 'the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit' (31: 3) - fell on deaf ears. Not only the Egyptian kings, but also the rulers of the aspiring neo-Babylonian Empire sought allies in Palestine-Syria against their powerful northern neighbour. It is in this light that one must interpret the information that King Merodachbaladan of Babylon sent envoys to Hezekiah when the latter was sick. Hezekiah showed them his treasury, and was reprimanded for doing so by the prophet Isaiah, who saw through the political manoeuvre involved in this 'visitation of the sick'.

In 701 BC, when the whole of Palestine-Syria once again rebelled against the Assyrians, we find Hezekiah, too, among their enemies. The Assyrian king Sennacherib (705-681 BC) promptly appeared on the battlefield and quelled the revolt. The effect produced by the sight of the Assyrian army is described in splendid fashion by the prophet Isaiah:

He will raise a signal for a nation afar off,
and whistle for it from the ends of the earth;
and lo, swiftly, speedily it comes!
None is weary, none stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a waistcloth is loose,
not a sandal-thong broken.
Their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,

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their horses' hooves seem like flint,
and their wheels like the whirlwind.
Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey,
they carry it off, and none can rescue (5: 26 ff.).

The Assyrian army was in fact irresistible. Sennacherib's march through Syria was a triumphal procession in the truest sense of the word. The cities along the coast succumbed at once, and the Egyptian-led coalition soon broke up. The prophet Isaiah gives a vivid account of the advance of the Assyrian army against Jerusalem, mentioning the names of a number of places to the north of the city which the enemy reached (10: 27 ff.).

Jerusalem was surrounded. From Lachish Sennacherib sent messages to Hezekiah calling upon him to surrender. He should not rely upon Egypt, for Egypt was a broken reed which pricked the hand of those who leaned upon it; it was Yahweh himself who had sent Sennacherib against Jerusalem; even mightier cities than Jerusalem had been obliged to yield before Assyrian power. Hezekiah turned to Isaiah for counsel. The prophet replied that the Lord would put Sennacherib in the spirit to return to Assyria. And Sennacherib was indeed content with tribute from Hezekiah. He broke off the siege and returned to Assur. The population of Jerusalem must have rejoiced at the withdrawal of his troops, but Isaiah saw matters more dispassionately:

Your country lies desolate,
your cities are burned with fire,
in your very presence
aliens devour your land;
it is desolate, as overthrown by aliens.
And the daughter of Zion is left
like a booth in a vineyard,
like a lodge in a cucumber field,
like a besieged city (Isaiah 1: 7 ff.).

The Book of Kings (II, 20:20) adds that Hezekiah built an aqueduct to ensure the city's water supply. This aqueduct was discovered on the south-eastern hill of Jerusalem in 1880; at the same time there came to light an inscription, written in the Old Semitic script and Hebrew language, affixed to the side of the tunnel, describing the scene as the

two parties of workmen, advancing from each end simultaneously, approached each other :

And this was the way in which it was cut through : while workmen were still wielding axes, each man toward his fellow, and while there were still three cubits to be cut through, there was heard the voice of a man calling to his fellow, for there was a cleft in the rock on the right. And on the day when the tunnel was driven through, the quarrymen hewed, each man toward his fellow, axe against axe ; and the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1,200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the heads of the quarrymen was one hundred cubits.

Hezekiah's successor, Manasseh, who ruled for more than fifty years, adopted an entirely different approach to religious matters from that of his father. All the Canaanite symbols which Hezekiah had abolished by his reform were brought back to Jerusalem. Throughout his life Manasseh remained an obedient vassal of the Assyrian kings ; both Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal mention him among their tributaries.

We do not know the reason why Manasseh's son, Amun, was murdered after a reign that lasted only two years. In any case after his assassination the rural population rose up in rebellion and made his son Josiah king. During the latter's reign two important events took place : the great religious reform of 622 and the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612 BC.

According to the Biblical account (II Kings ch. 22 and 23) the book of the law was found by chance while repair work was being carried out in the Temple at Jerusalem. King Josiah commanded that the book be brought to him ; alarmed at its contents, he immediately decreed a radical religious reform which went far beyond that of his great-grandfather Hezekiah. In the first place he abolished the cult of all the foreign gods that had already found their way into Jerusalem under Solomon ; it is only now that we are told how bad the situation had become in this respect. He then went on to eliminate all the objects connected with the official Yahweh cult which in reality belonged to the ancient Canaanite religion : stone columns, wooden poles, and objects used in divination and magic. The most sweeping reform of all was the destruction of all the sanctuaries outside Jerusalem ; only in the Temple at Jerusalem itself was Yahweh henceforth to be worshipped. One cannot assume that this reform was carried out at the instigation of the

priesthood in Jerusalem, in order to obtain many more sacrificial offerings in their capacity as administrators of what was now the only sanctuary in the country, because the priests who had officiated at sanctuaries outside the city now moved to Jerusalem. The real purpose of the centralization of worship was to assure better control over the way in which the divine service was performed. This reform which Josiah enacted is to a great extent in conformity with the demands put forward in Deuteronomy – so much so that there can be no doubt that part of this book is indeed the book of the law found in the Temple at that time (622 BC). There is no reason to suppose that it was fraudulent (i.e., that the priests in Jerusalem themselves arranged for the discovery to be made). We know today that it was common practice throughout the ancient Near East to deposit important documents in sanctuaries. The book of the law discovered in the Temple at Jerusalem in 622 may have been a document which had played a role in the reform of Hezekiah, which had followed similar lines.

The Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–668) succeeded in conquering Egypt; the trade-routes from Africa to Asia were thus controlled by a single power. But already during the reign of his successor Assurbanipal King Psammetichus I, who had acceded to the throne of Egypt in 663, was able to liberate his country from Assyrian rule. The very fact that this was possible is evidence of the extent to which Assyrian power had now declined. The final blow, which put an end to the Assyrian Empire, came from a different direction. In 612 BC the Assyrian capital Nineveh was destroyed by the united Babylonians and Medes. The fall of the Assyrian Empire must have seemed a sensational event to contemporaries. This is shown by an utterance of the prophet Nahum:

Woe to the bloody city,
all full of lies and booty –
no end to the plunder!
The crack of a whip, and rumble of wheel,
galloping horse and bounding chariot!
Horsemen charging,
flashing sword and glittering spear,
hosts of slain,
heaps of corpses,
dead bodies without end –
they stumble over the bodies!

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And all for the countless harlotries of the harlot,
graceful and of deadly charms,
who betrays nations with her harlotries,
and people with her charms (Nahum 3: 1 ff.).

The disturbances which broke out in Asia Minor after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire also led to the death of King Josiah. In a Biblical narrative (II Kings 23: 29) we hear that the Egyptian Neco (Necho) II took the field against the Assyrians and that he came up against Josiah at Megiddo, where the latter was slain. Today we know from a recently discovered Babylonian chronicle that the Biblical writer made a minor error. Neco II did not take the field *against* the Assyrians but as an *ally* of the last remnants of that people after their empire had collapsed. Egypt sensed that in the Babylonians it had a new enemy, and straight-away took up a firm position in the struggle for Palestine-Syria. Josiah, on the other hand, set out into battle against the Egyptians as an ally of the Babylonians, instead of remaining neutral in the new conflicts developing between the great powers.

Joahaz, who became king after Josiah, was not amenable to the Egyptian pharaoh Neco II and was deported to Egypt. The prophet Jeremiah lamented his loss as follows:

Weep not for him who is dead,
nor bemoan him;
but weep bitterly for him who goes away,
for he shall return no more
to see his native land (Jeremiah 22: 10 f.).

The prophet Ezekiel also remembered with moving words the young king who had been banished to Egypt:

And you, take up a lamentation
for the princes of Israel and say:
'What a lioness was your mother among lions!
She couched in the midst of young lions,
rearing her whelps.
And she brought up one of her whelps;
he became a young lion,
and he learned to catch prey;
he devoured men.
The nations sounded an alarm against him;

he was taken in their pit;
and they brought him with hooks
to the land of Egypt' (Ezekiel 19: 1-4).

The new ruler of southern Israel was Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, who apparently seemed more tractable to the Egyptians. A few years afterwards the Egyptians suffered utter defeat at the city of Carchemish on the Euphrates. About this event the Biblical narrative says laconically:

And the king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates (II Kings 24: 7).

Jehoiakim submitted to the Babylonians who marched into Palestine-Syria, but reasserted his independence three years later. He died before retribution befell him, and it was his son and successor, Jehoiachin who had to atone for his treason. In 597 BC the latter was deported to Babylon together with many of the leading citizens of Jerusalem. According to a Babylonian document which has recently been deciphered this event took place on 16 March of that year. Among those deported was the prophet Ezekiel, who refers to this event in his prophecies:

A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colours, came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar; he broke off the topmost of its young twigs and carried it to a land of trade and set it in a city of merchants (Ezekiel 17: 1-4).

Jehoiachin, incidentally, ended his days in a pleasant manner. As a Biblical narrative records, thirty-seven years after his banishment he was pardoned by Nebuchadnezzar II's successor and allowed to spend the last years of his life at the Babylonian court. A cuneiform document recently found in Babylonia contains a note of the victuals allotted to him and his men.

Nebuchadnezzar II appointed Zedekiah as the last king of southern Israel. An uncle of the deported Jehoiachin, he at first remained a vassal of the Babylonian ruler. But soon the pro-Egyptian party at his court began to agitate anew in favour of Psammetichus II, who had acceded to power in 593. The prophet Jeremiah, who had remained in the country, was not the only one to express misgivings about this policy - 'thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed

of Assyria' (2: 36); Ezekiel, too, who had been deported to Babylon, endeavoured to prevent King Zedekiah from carrying out his intention by evoking an image of two great eagles (Babylonia and Egypt). All in vain! In 590 BC Nebuchadnezzar II appeared in Palestine-Syria.

A lion has gone up from his thicket,
a destroyer of nations has set out;
he has gone forth from his place
to make your land a waste;
your cities will be ruins
without inhabitants . . .
Behold, he comes up like clouds,
his chariots like the whirlwind;
his horses are swifter than eagles –
woe to us, for we are ruined! (Jeremiah 4: 7 ff.)

This is how the prophet Jeremiah saw the approach of the Babylonian king. His warriors poured into the southern kingdom; one fortress after another fell into his hands. It is perhaps to these battles that reference is made in one passage in the letters found at Tell ed-Duweir, a fortified place in southern Palestine (plate 52).

And let my lord know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah.

After a three-year siege Jerusalem was conquered in 587 BC and completely destroyed. A large part of the population was deported to Babylonia. King Zedekiah met a fearful end. Nebuchadnezzar II had his sons killed before his eyes, then had him blinded and brought captive to Babylonia.

5 *Religion, Art and Literature of the People of Israel*

Looking back over Israelite history, there can be no doubt that the destiny of Israel, as of the other states in Palestine-Syria, was determined by their exposed geographical situation. This land bridge between Africa and Asia was bound to be a bone of contention between the great powers in Egypt, Anatolia and Mesopotamia; the struggle for the trade-routes running through the area posed a continual threat to the freedom of its inhabitants.

As against all the understandable endeavours made to secure their freedom and resist foreign conquerors, the Israelite prophets held more and more to the view that Israel should keep out of the quarrels of this temporal world. It is obvious that the prophets were bound to come into conflict with the political and military authorities on this account.

But also in religious matters the prophets found themselves constantly opposed to the religious and political institutions of Israel, both in the southern and the northern kingdoms. In the second millennium the prevalent tendency in Palestine-Syria was to worship a large number of gods and goddesses, with relative freedom; they were enshrouded in numerous myths and served by a firmly established cult. This Canaanite milieu was suddenly struck, as though by a flash of lightning, by Moses's new teaching of a single supernatural, eternal, moral divine being, who would not tolerate any gods other than himself. What effect did this have in the long run? It is natural that the new teaching never again disappeared officially from Israelite life. But in the religious outlook of the broad masses Canaanite rituals and legends were too deeply rooted to yield completely to such a purely spiritual concept of God — one which prohibited representation of the Deity in images. From beginning to end the entire traditional Canaanite cult, with its sacrifices and myths, was made to serve the new God Yahweh. This state of affairs, which was always passionately criticized by the prophets, has been fully corroborated by archaeological discoveries. A good insight into an Israelite sanctuary of the first millennium *bc* is given by the excavations at Tell ed-Duweir in southern Palestine. We can see distinctly the altar and the benches used by the faithful. It was here that the age-long struggle developed between the prophets on one hand and the kings and priests on the other, which frequently took on tragic forms, and which produced such a feeling of hopelessness that Jeremiah in particular almost came to conflict with his God (plates 49, 52).

The literary prophets of the Old Testament were all the better able to represent such a transcendental concept of the deity because their faith was not only related to past events but looked ultimately to a brighter future. Time and again their preaching ended with a more or less distinct reference to the figure of the Messiah, who 'at the end of days' would found a new and imperishable divine kingdom.

The messianic idea as such is very old. Echoes of it may be found in Babylonia and in Egypt at a time when the people of Israel had not even

come into existence. And it is quite possible that the idea of a divine saviour reached Palestine from some other country, and was then taken up by the great prophets. But only in Israel was this idea thought out to its conclusion and made fruitful for the future.

The prophets were not the first people in Israel to proclaim the coming of the Messiah, for even prior to the prophets we find this idea in songs and proverbs. It is, for example, apparent in chapter 49 of Genesis, a collection of ancient proverbs in which it is said of the tribe of Judah:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples (49: 10).

It must, of course, be stressed that, as regards the 'day of Yahweh' at 'the end of days', there was a radical difference between the views of the great prophets and those of the broad mass of the population. Whereas the latter expected the last days to be only a time of salvation and happiness, the prophets linked them in the first place with divine judgment upon Israel and upon all other peoples, from which the world would emerge purified. Amos, the first literary prophet, had already felt impelled to exclaim to his fellow countrymen:

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!
Why would you have the day of the Lord?
It is darkness and not light;
as if a man fled from a lion,
and a bear met him;
or went into the house and leaned
with his hand against the wall,
and a serpent bit him.
Is not the day of the Lord darkness
and gloom, with no brightness in it? (Amos 5: 18-20).

Of course, once judgment had been passed the Lord would raise up the tabernacle of David that had fallen, close up the breaches in it, and raise up its ruins (Amos 9: 11 f.). The linking of the messianic idea with the dynasty of David, to which we have referred above, is worthy of note.

Amos's contemporary, the prophet Hosea, also sees the end of all things in the light of the messianic idea. The Israelites of the northern and southern kingdoms will one day be gathered together and will

appoint *one* king (Hosea 1: 11). The climax of messianic preaching is reached with Isaiah:

The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
 those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
 on them has light shone.
 Thou hast multiplied the nation,
 thou hast increased its joy;
 they rejoice before thee
 as with joy at the harvest,
 as men when they divide the spoil . . .
 For to us a child is born,
 to us a son is given;
 and the government will be upon his shoulder,
 and his name will be called
 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9: 2-6).

The language of such prophecies is often obscure to us, especially when the prophets use words and expressions which were familiar to their contemporaries but incomprehensible to us. For example, when Isaiah spoke of the woman 'who will give birth to a son' in whom a prophecy will come true, he was using old and familiar concepts with which everyone was acquainted. Nor did anyone find the meaning of his words obscure when he described the future in the following terms:

There shall come forth a shoot
 from the stump of Jesse
 and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
 the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 the spirit of counsel and might,
 the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord
 (Isaiah 11: 1 ff.).

Like Isaiah, his contemporary Micah also linked the last days with the rule of David's dynasty when he mentioned the small town of Bethlehem (David's birthplace) as the spot where the world of the Messiah would come into being (5: 1). In one saying which is attributed to him as well as to the prophet Isaiah – probably both of them used the same earlier source – he set out an idealized image of the future as follows:

It shall come to pass in the latter days
 that the mountain of the house of the Lord
 shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
 and shall be raised up above the hills;
 and peoples shall flow to it,
 and many nations shall come, and say:
 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
 to the house of the God of Jacob;
 that he may teach us his ways
 and we may walk in his paths.'
 For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
 and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
 He shall judge between many peoples,
 and shall decide for strong nations afar off;
 and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
 and their spears into pruning-hooks;
 nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
 neither shall they learn war any more;
 but they shall sit every man under
 his vine and under his fig-tree,
 and none shall make them afraid;
 for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken (4: 1-3).

The messianic idea remained alive even after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies about the 'shepherd, his servant David' who shall pasture his flock (35: 23 ff.); in another passage he refers to his 'servant David' who shall be the prince of his people for eternity. The 'songs of the servant of the Lord', which are interwoven into an anonymous composition appended to Isaiah's prophecy, are also thoroughly messianic in character.

The development of the messianic idea among the people of Israel is imbued with real tragedy. The main point in the prophets' thinking about the last days was the expectation that after the Lord had judged *all* people, including Israel, there would commence a period of universal peace and happiness; but the broad mass of the Jewish people came ever closer to the belief that the Last Judgment would only affect the enemies of Israel, and that Israel would emerge from it as ultimate ruler over other peoples. The supranational messianic idea became twisted into a national one. This was the main reason why the Jews rejected the Messiah when He really came. The reason for this may have been the

fusion of the messianic idea with the dynasty of David; this gave it a national and this-worldly character.

Israel gave magnificent expression to its piety in the form of religious poetry. The Book of Psalms, rightly called 'the hymn-book of the Old Testament', provides splendid testimony to the extent to which the new religion had affected the sphere of cult. We have already mentioned that, long before the people of Israel came into existence, the Canaanites of the second millennium BC had psalms which both in language and imagery were reminiscent of those in the Bible. And it is quite possible that, as the Israelites intermingled with the Canaanites, many of these psalms served as models for Israelite poets. But here, as in all other spheres of religious thought, we again find that what was borrowed from foreign sources came to be illumined, and transformed into something entirely original, by the new concept of God to which the Israelites held.

The understanding of the Biblical psalms is very greatly facilitated when they are considered according to the various genres of literature to which they belong: i.e., according to the motives that led to their composition. There is no doubt that these religious songs also played a major part in divine service. We certainly have a liturgical hymn in Psalm 136: 1 ff.:

O give thanks to the Lord,
for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures for ever.
O give thanks to the God of gods ...

In other psalms we can visualize a festive crowd thronging the temple.

Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob!
Raise a song, sound the timbrel (Psalm 81: 1).

Frequently we also find the eschatological psalm, in which the Lord is described as victor in the battle of the last days:

The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!
Clouds and thick darkness are round about him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne
(Psalm 97: 1 ff.).

Many are prayers, and these can be further subdivided. Another group may be called hymns; it is they which have perhaps made the greatest impact upon the Christian hymn-book – as in the beautiful Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters . . .

Although much may be foreign to us in the psalms, as for example Psalm 137: 8 f., we can nevertheless appreciate them as testimonies to the deep piety of the men of the Old Testament.

In myth, too, we observe the same development as in ritual worship and religious poetry. The Canaanite myths which we have already discussed were, of course, still well known in all the city-kingdoms of Palestine when the Israelites immigrated and took possession of the country. But just as the cult of many Canaanite gods was incompatible with that of the God of Moses, so too with the Canaanite myths: the colourful pantheistic world must have made an equally strong impression upon the Israelite immigrants as did the cults whereby they were worshipped. But from the beginning they realized that here they had a world of ideas wholly opposed to the faith of Moses. And thus the Canaanite myths, together with elements of Babylonian mythology that had penetrated into the country, were transformed into events in which a leading role was played by the God Yahweh. The realistic Canaanite myths were often given a spiritual form; yet the actual origin of these innovations could never be entirely concealed. The Creation narrative in the first chapter of Genesis, in which we are shown a spiritual God lording it over chaos, can be recognized as a continuation of the Babylonian Creation myth, in which we are told of the battle between the god Marduk and the dragon Tiamat, and of the creation of the universe out of Tiamat, with the numerous Babylonian gods present as spectators. Much of this still shimmers through our Biblical account. The Babylonian monster of chaos, Tiamat, has become the Biblical Tehom; sun and moon 'rule' like gods over day and night; and the plural in 'let *us* make man in our image' (Genesis 1: 26) hints at the polytheism of the Babylonian model.

But the Babylonian myths were not the only ones that inspired the Israelites after their entry into the country. We have already considered

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a Canaanite poem in which the god Baal engages in battle with the sea god. This myth may be linked with a passage in the Book of Isaiah in which the God of Israel is addressed in the following words:

Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the Lord;
awake, as in the days of old,
the generation of long ago.
Wast it not thou that didst cut
Rahab in pieces,
that didst pierce the dragon?
Wast it not thou that didst dry up the sea,
the waters of the great deep? ... (Isaiah 51: 9 f.).

These myths are also referred to in the dialogues of the Book of Job, when the Lord reproaches Job for not having been present when the world was created.

'Where were you when I laid
the foundation of the earth? ...
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone,
when the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst forth from the womb;
and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
and said: "Thus far shall you come,
and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stayed"?'
(Job 38: 4 ff.).

Time and again we encounter passages of this kind in the Old Testament. They provide evidence of the attraction which Canaanite myths had for the Israelites; and at the same time they show the force of the new creed introduced by Moses, which permeated and overshadowed all things.

The Biblical myth of paradise and the fall of man takes us to Mesopotamia – as is indicated by the names given to the rivers in paradise. The theme of the jealousy of the gods – 'behold, the man is become like one of us, knowing good and evil: and now, lest he put forth

his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever . . .' (Genesis 3: 22) – we have already noted in the Ugaritic tale of Daniel and his son Aqhat. Here the goddess Anath looks with jealous eyes upon Aqhat's bow, which the gods had given him, and kills him on that account. A more vivid version of the paradise myth was also known in Israel, as we can see from an allocution by the prophet Ezekiel against the king of Tyre (28: 12 ff.). In this the king is depicted as a cherub sitting on the mountain of God in the garden of Eden, but is cast down to earth because of his sins.

The legend of the Flood is no doubt Babylonian in origin: the similarities are so striking that the connection is undeniable. But here, too, we can perceive the influence of the religion proclaimed by the prophets: for in the Biblical account there is only *one* God who acts – and no further mention of the numerous bickering deities found in the Babylonian model.

There are probably relics of Canaanite legend in chapter 6 of Genesis, where we are told that the sons of God take the daughters of men for their wives. The legend of the appearance of Joshua (5: 13 ff.), the man with the drawn sword, who then turns out to be the 'commander of Yahweh's army', also has many Canaanite features.

Heroic legends are to be found in the story of the mythical figures who lived before the Flood (Genesis 5: 1 ff.) and in that of the prophet Elijah being carried off to heaven (II Kings 2: 11).

In their preaching the great Israelite prophets made no mention of a world beyond; this is a crucial difference between the outlook of the Old Testament and that of the New: for the Christian, life with God does not come to an end after death. On the other hand, there is also something noble about this attitude of the prophets. It required that man should live out his life in a manner pleasing to God, without any hope of recompense in the world beyond. Among the broad mass of the population there were some vague notions about a realm inhabited by shades of the dead; such ideas probably underlie the myth about the nether world which is applied to the king of Babel in the Book of Isaiah:

Your pomp is brought down to Sheol,
the sound of your harps;
maggots are the bed beneath you,
and worms are your covering (Isaiah 14: 11 f.).

Alongside this world of religious experience, with all its various shades of meaning, there existed a primitive world of occultism and magic. We have already mentioned Saul's attempt to establish contact with the deceased Samuel by means of necromancy. There were objects with the aid of which it was thought possible to conjure up the dead. Whereas the prophets of the Old Testament, as we have just pointed out, had no belief in an after-life, the broad mass of the Israelite people did have vague notions about a realm of the dead, in which the souls of the deceased, the *Rephaim*, led a shadowy – though not completely insensate – existence. This explains the practice of depositing funerary gifts when burying the dead, and much else besides. As well as spirits of the dead there were believed to be demons of the desert, demons of the night, and yet other demons which caused illness. To exorcize these demons a great variety of media were used, but only by certain persons specially fitted for the purpose. Among these media a prominent part was played by water, blood and certain plants. The ringing of bells was also thought to ward off demons.

Let us recall the miracle-working rod shown in Moses' hand. According to the Old Testament narrative a mere touch of Elisha's rod upon the face of the Shunammite woman's dead child sufficed to bring him back to life. Salt was said to have made drinkable the polluted water of the spring at Jericho. A particular magic power was ascribed to hands. By the laying on of hands magic power was supposed to flow from one man to another. Sepulchral monuments bore the likeness of a hand in lieu of the whole figure, and such a monument was even called for short 'a hand'. It was thought possible to confuse men's minds and so lead them astray; and to bring back the dead to life by having a person with miraculous powers lie down upon the corpse – or even merely touch the body of the deceased. It was believed that the clouds were inhabited by demons, and thus that rain could be brought on by casting a spell. Certain events were thought to manifest the will of God. Such omens could appear in nature, or in the behaviour of animals or men. From this belief it was but a step to trial by divine ordeal: in cases where human justice was found wanting, God was called in to decide. The future could be foretold, especially by the interpretation of dreams. Such prophecy was known already in Ugaritic mythology. In the myth of Baal the god El discovers in a dream that Baal has come back to life. In the epic of Keret and Hurriya Keret is advised in a dream how he should seek the king's daughter, Hurriya. Dreams conveyed clearly and

distinctly personal messages from God to the individual concerned. There were also dreams which had to be explained by someone else. If such dreams did not occur of their own accord, men would go to sleep in the sanctuary in order to obtain the desired revelation.

These primitive beliefs corresponded to the pattern of thought at the time and helped to mould the basic outlook of the broad mass of the population in Palestine-Syria during five thousand years of their history. In the preaching of the great prophets there was, of course, no place for such notions.

One question has still to be considered: what was the attitude to nature of the Israelites in the first millennium BC and of the Canaanites in the second millennium BC? There is no doubt that in the Old Testament nature is regarded first and foremost as a revelation of the spiritual God who stands above it. Earthquakes, droughts and all kinds of natural catastrophes are ultimately traceable to God, who controls all things. The sun, moon and stars have been created by God – although sometimes it is possible to detect ancient mythological themes here as well.

The Canaanites thought differently – and often traces of their outlook are also to be met with among the Israelites. The Canaanites saw the whole of nature as alive with gods of varying rank. Each stone, each tree, each spring was inhabited by a deity to whom one had to pay occasional tribute. In the Ugaritic myth of Anath, Baal and Mot the god Baal sends a message to the goddess Anath:

I've a word I fain would tell thee,
a speech I would utter to thee:
speech of tree and whisper of stone,
converse of heaven with earth,
e'en of the deeps with the stars;
yea, a thunderbolt unknown to heaven,
a word not known to me,
nor sensed by the masses on earth.

But it would probably be wrong to see in this the beginnings of a philosophy of nature; this was rather the mysterious language spoken by all the deities who inhabited various natural phenomena.

This presented Israelite monotheism with particular problems for which it found a solution of its own. A striking example of this is Psalm 19, which Beethoven set to music. The first seven verses of this psalm are no doubt based upon the ancient Near Eastern myth of the

sun god who rises daily between the mountain tops and triumphs heroically over the powers of darkness. The Biblical psalm has turned this into a superb hymn to God exalted over nature. The psalm has not the slightest affinity with the modern attitude to nature, with the poetic feeling best expressed in Goethe's *Wie herrlich leuchtet mir die Natur*. We find the same theme treated in Psalm 8: God's greatness is made manifest to a Biblical poet above all in two things, the lulling of an infant and the starry night sky above. 'What is man that thou art mindful of him . . .', yet he is overpowered by the sight of these wonders, which make him aware of his divine mission: 'Yet thou hast made him little less than God.' In an account in the Books of Samuel of David's battles (II, 5: 23 ff.) we are told that God wishes to make a sign to David:

When you hear the sound of
marching in the tops of the
balsam trees, then bestir thyself.

But this is not a companion-piece to the German poet's song *Der liebe Gott geht durch den Wald*. Although the latter words may well have been coined in a pious mood, for this very reason they reflect the *mood* of the poet. The Biblical text conveys an idea that is quite different. It is the deity that lives in the trees whom David hears marching. We have here a truly Canaanite concept, only slightly obscured.

This should not astonish us. The whole of the Old Testament is permeated by such an intense religious spirit that even nature is drawn into its orbit. There is no room for the modern attitude to nature. In the Song of Solomon, too, the frequent references to the beauties of nature are no more than a framework for a description of erotic feelings.

There is abundant information in the Old Testament sources about the private lives of the population in Palestine-Syria. Most attention, naturally, is given to matters concerning marriage and family life. In conformity with oriental customs that still survive today, polygamy was permitted; the number of wives a man might take in practice depended only upon his wealth. After marriage the husband's chief concern was to have male offspring, for a son would keep his family in being. In the two Ugaritic epics quoted above, the action begins with Daniel and Keret wishing to have a son; and in the former epic the duties of the child that Daniel anticipates are enumerated in detail. If marriage with the first wife remained infertile, the man married a second. But it was also

possible for a slave girl to take the place of the first wife, and the first son born of this union was then the legitimate heir. These legal norms are the background to the tale about the expulsion of Hagar and her son Ishmael (Genesis 16: 6 ff.). Sarah, who is at first barren, herself requests Abraham to take her slave, Hagar, and to produce a male heir. But when, in later life, she herself gives birth to a boy after all, she expels Hagar and Ishmael. For if Ishmael had remained in the family, he would have had to be treated as a legitimate son.

If a man died without a son being born to him during his lifetime, his single brother was obliged to continue the marriage with the widow. The first son who was then born was the legitimate son of the deceased brother. This 'levirate marriage', as it was called, was also well known in Assyrian law and provided the motif for the tale of Tamar and Judah (Genesis 38). Judah shirks this duty of concluding a levirate marriage when his son dies without issue, and does not give Tamar in marriage to his second son. Tamar disguises herself as a whore; her father-in-law lives with her and later, when she becomes pregnant, is identified as the father by a pledge which he had left her.

A man had to obtain a wife by purchase, and also had to give her presents on marriage. In one of the Ugaritic myths we have already heard how the parents of the goddess Nikal weighed up the bride-price when the moon god Yareah was courting her favour. If the man was poor he could purchase a wife by his labour. Thus Jacob served for seven years in each case in order to obtain his two wives Leah and Rachel.

Adultery consisted solely in the man associating with a married woman; otherwise no restrictions were imposed upon him, so long as he did not use any force upon his wife.

The husband had the right to divorce his wife, in which case she returned to her family. Children were obliged to obey their father unconditionally.

Family law was codified at an early date. The so-called Book of the Covenant, rightly attributed to Moses, already contains a number of such provisions.

Eight days after birth a male child was circumcized. Circumcision may have been regarded later as a tribal symbol, but originally it no doubt signified a sacrifice made to a deity thought to have played some part at the child's birth.

The names of the child, given to it either by the father or the mother,

no doubt had magic significance in the parents' minds. For according to primitive beliefs, only when something possesses a name does it have a meaning.

So far as the material culture of Palestine-Syria in the Israelite period is concerned, the general tendency was the same as in the second millennium B.C. In agriculture use was made of hoes, wine- and oil-presses, and threshing-sledges with iron prongs. The prophet Isaiah gives us some useful information when he depicts God's wise ordering of the universe in terms of the regular laws of agriculture.

Does he who ploughs for sowing plough continually?
Does he continually open and harrow his ground?
When he has levelled its surface,
does he not scatter dill, sow cummin,
and put in wheat in rows
and barley in its proper place,
and spelt as the border?
For he is instructed aright;
his God teaches him.
Dill is not threshed with a threshing-sledge,
nor is a cart-wheel rolled over cummin;
but dill is beaten out with a stick,
and cummin with a rod.
Does one crush bread grain?
No, he does not thresh it for ever;
when he drives his cart-wheel over it
with his horses, he does not crush it.
This also comes from the Lord of Hosts;
he is wonderful in counsel,
and excellent in wisdom' (Isaiah 28: 24 ff.).

We need not be astonished to hear such words from the mouth of a prophet. The Israelites were in the main a peasant people, and the prophets were keen to draw on daily life for the images they used in their preaching.

The employment of false weights and measures was a punishable offence in Israelite law. 'Diverse weights are an abomination to the Lord, and false scales are not good,' we read in the Book of Proverbs (20: 23).

The lamps in use differed little in shape from those of an earlier period. A new type, however, was a lantern fashioned in clay found at Amman,

east of the river Jordan, which in turn contained a small lamp for the light.

According to literary sources the dress worn by the Israelites consisted of an outer and an inner garment, a belt, coat and head-band; as archaeological finds have shown, there were great differences as regards headgear.

Personal hygiene is attested by a clay model found at Ez-Zib, which shows a woman sitting at a basin washing herself. The words that occur in one psalm against the Moabites, 'Moab is my wash-pot', had a thoroughly realistic connotation. The verse proves that wash-pots existed, and was no doubt intended to illustrate Moab's humiliation (plate 56).

Jewellery, fashioned of gold, silver or precious stones, resembled very closely that of the second millennium BC. Houses continued to be built on a square plan, as may be seen from an Assyrian representation of the city of Ashtaroth, east of the Jordan.

In Israel the usual practice was to bury the dead; but instances of cremation are also known. In the latter case the ashes were generally placed in jars. Iron coffins also appear at this time. The dead were interred in their dwellings and also in caves; the chief place of interment was, however, the sepulchral chamber or tomb, in which the deceased were laid on benches or in niches. It was the custom to provide the dead in their graves with objects of everyday use, such as jewellery, weapons or jars. An unusual funerary gift was found at Tell el-Ajjul in southern Palestine where, in addition to other objects, a horse was buried alongside the deceased in a huge sepulchral chamber.

At this time, too, stelae were erected bearing funerary inscriptions. The script was Old Semitic, as had been the case in the second millennium BC, although there were some slight modifications of the earlier forms. Nerab, near Aleppo, has yielded two fine stelae, both belonging to priests of the god Shamar. One of the two priests is represented in a seated posture, holding a bowl in his hand; opposite him is a servant with a fly-whisk. The inscription, written in Aramaic, states that the god Shamar let the deceased live for a long time on account of his impartiality in the administration of justice. Now that he is dead his mouth should not remain closed to speech (is this a protest against the custom of placing a stopper on the mouth of the deceased?) and his eyes should continue to see. More than one hundred great-grandchildren

mourn him, but they did not place into his grave any gold or silver vessels. (The last statement may be designed to ward off grave-robbers.) But if anybody were to touch the grave, he would die a horrible death. Except for the names, the style and content bear a close resemblance to those of sepulchral stelae erected in the second millennium BC. The accompanying text bears distinct evidence of belief in a life beyond, which may also have been the real reason for the large number of funerary gifts (plate 54).

The reference to funerary stelae leads us to the question of the art works and handicraft products which the first millennium BC had to offer. In the first place we must point to the ivory plaques such as have been found at Samaria, capital of the northern Israelite kingdom. It is these small ivory tablets, which were probably affixed to walls or to objects used in everyday life, which the prophet Amos has in mind when he reprimands the carefree inhabitants of Samaria: 'Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory' (Amos 6: 4). It is also said of the Israelite king Ahab that his house was inlaid with ivory (plate 58).

Fine works of craftsmanship have been discovered at Tell el-Farah in southern Palestine: two silver ladles, the handles of which consist of recumbent nude female figures (plate 57).

Representations of human beings are to be seen in two limestone statues from Amman, east of the Jordan. An imposing image of a deity was found at Djekke: the god stands upon a bull, holding in his left hand a trident and in his right hand a fruit (plates 50, 51 and 55).

The Israelites liked to embellish the entrances to their palaces and temples with carvings in stone representing animals or fabulous beasts. A huge lion that once adorned a porch has been unearthed at Sheikh Saad, east of the Jordan (plate 57).

From the period of the Israelite monarchy we must mention two peculiar representations of human heads, one of which is similar to the portrait vase discovered at Beth-Shemesh in southern Palestine: the sharply curving nose and pointed beard are most striking. Excavations at Tell ed-Duweir have yielded a most curious work of art, the only one of its kind: a human head hewn out of the rock on one side of a crevice. Whom was this meant to represent? We can hardly assume that it was an ordinary mortal. The site is located in the territory of the former southern kingdom. Was one of the kings of this state immortalized here? (See plate 59.)

The range of artistic products was narrow. This is mainly due to the

fact that the Decalogue forbade the making of 'any likeness of any thing' (Exodus 20: 4).

Israel had both religious and secular literature. The most original genre was undoubtedly the victory song. We have already discussed the ancient song that told of the triumphant exodus from Egypt. Mention should also be made of Samson's song of exultation after his victory over the Philistines.

With the jawbone of an ass,
heaps upon heaps;
with the jawbone of an ass
have I slain a thousand men (Judges 15: 16).

When Saul and David returned in triumph from the battlefield they exclaimed to the rejoicing throngs of women:

Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his ten thousands (I Samuel 18: 6 f.).

Another genre was the song of revenge. The finest example of this is 'the Song of Lamech', which the latter sings to his two wives:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, hearken to what I say:
I have slain a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold (Genesis 4: 23).

The folk-song, too, is represented by a few examples in the Old Testament. For wandering Beduin there is nothing quite so desirable as a natural spring. One such spring is the subject of the following lines:

Spring up, O well –
Sing to it! –
the well which the princes dug,
which the nobles of the people delved,
with the sceptre and with their staves
(Numbers 21: 17 ff.).

A folk-song praising the beauty of Palestine is put into the mouth of the prophet Balaam.

How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!

Like valleys that stretch afar,
 like gardens beside a river,
 like aloes that the Lord has planted,
 like cedar-trees beside the waters
 (Numbers 24: 5 ff.).

In Old Testament literature a considerable place is occupied by love songs. It has long been recognized that Psalm 45 belongs to this group: it is a song that was sung on the occasion of the wedding of a king of Tyre:

My heart overflows with a goodly theme;
 I address my verses to the king;
 my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.
 You are the fairest of the sons of men;
 grace is poured upon your lips;
 therefore God has blessed you for ever.

. . .

Hear, O daughter, consider, and incline your ear;
 forget your people and your father's house;
 and the king will desire your beauty.
 Since he is your lord, bow to him;
 the people of Tyre will sue your favour with gifts.

It has also long been well known that the Song of Solomon falls into the group of love songs. There is no other way of interpreting the following verses:

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride,
 you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes,
 with one jewel of your necklace.
 How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!
 How much better is your love than wine,
 and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! (4: 9-11).

That this book found its way at all into the books of the Old Testament can be explained only by the allegorical interpretation which was given to it by the early Christian Church. In the nineteenth century the view came to prevail that these were secular love songs. But recently a number of Babylonian cult songs have been discovered praising the mythical goddess of love, Ishtar, and the god of death and resurrection, Tammuz. There has thus been a growing tendency to regard the Song of

Solomon as a collection of similar cult songs. One cannot imagine the distinctly erotic words uttered by a female personage here being expressed by an Israelite girl of this period. In the myth of Anath and Baal we came across the motif of the dying god who rises again from the dead. This suggests that a similar legend may have been known in Palestine-Syria. Its development may have been prompted by the Babylonian myth of Ishtar and Tammuz; but in the Song of Solomon we no doubt have a product of the religious concepts current in Palestine-Syria.

Another popular literary enterprise was the composition of proverbs. The so-called ethnological proverbs register the qualities characteristic of various tribes. These were often compiled to form whole collections. In Genesis 49: 13 the tribe of Zebulun is characterized as living on the sea-coast, at the landing-place of ships, but bordering upon the city of Sidon. The proverb in Deuteronomy 33: 7 must have been composed in the northern Israelite kingdom. It originates from a period prior to that of Moses and comprises a prayer that God may return the tribe of Judah to his people: 'Hear, O Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people.' It expresses the desire of the two kingdoms for reunification.

A special type of song is the dramatic psalm, as it may best be called, in which several persons are featured. One such is Psalm 2, which was given a messianic interpretation. First of all the poet appears and gives a survey of the situation of his country at the time, when danger evidently threatened (verses 1-2). The enemies get a brief hearing (verse 3), but God exposes them to ridicule (verses 4-6). Finally we come to the main point: the king appears and makes known a divine prophecy which he has been vouchsafed (verses 7-9). The final words are again those of the poet (verses 10-12). It is easy to imagine that a poem of this kind could be adapted to performance as a real pageant.

One funeral dirge has already come to our attention: the moving hymn sung on the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, who were slain on Mount Gilboa in battle against the Philistines. The prophets, too, were fond of proclaiming their prophecies – even those made against foreign countries – in the form of dirges. The dirges about the fall of Jerusalem have been collected into a special book of the Old Testament.

Maxims and sayings were also popular in the books of the Old Testament. Samson says to the Philistines who find out from his wife the answer to the riddle he sets them:

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If you had not ploughed with my heifer,
you would not have found out my riddle
(Judges 14: 18).

To plough with somebody else's heifer means to obtain some advantage by illegal means. To King Benhadad of Damascus the king of Israel says, when announcing to him the imminent destruction of his capital Samaria: 'let not him that girds on his armour boast himself as he that puts it off' (I Kings 20: 12).

Samson sets the Philistines a riddle after finding honeycombs in the dead body of a lion:

out of the eater came something to eat.
Out of the strong came something sweet
(Judges 14: 14).

After Delilah had divulged to the Philistines the answer to the riddle they replied:

What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?

It is also told of the queen of Sheba that she set Solomon a riddle during her visit to Jerusalem.

During the first century of Israelite history on Palestinian soil, a man by the name of Abimelech seized power in the city of Shechem by killing all his brothers except one, who succeeded in escaping. The latter stood on top of Mount Gerizim and announced to the citizens of Shechem what their destiny would be, in the form of the following fable (Judges 9: 8 ff.). The trees once set about anointing a king to rule over them. But most of them declined the offer: the olive because it would not forfeit its fatness, the fig because it would not forfeit its sweetness, and the vine because it attached greater importance to its wine, 'which cheers gods and men'. Thereupon the trees elected the bramble as their king. But the latter pointed out to them straight away that this would mean their end. The Book of Kings (II, 14: 8 ff.) records that one southern Israelite king challenged the ruler of the northern kingdom to a duel. The latter framed his reply in the form of a fable: 'A thistle on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying: "give your daughter to my son for wife"; and a wild beast of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thistle.'

A peculiar genre of literature in the Old Testament is that known as 'wisdom literature'. The most important work of this kind is the Book of

Proverbs. The central point of interest is wisdom, the embodiment of prudent action and right living in this terrestrial world. According to this wisdom the most important thing is not to live for an ideal but in such a way as to obtain worldly prosperity.

Happy is the man who finds wisdom,
and the man who gets understanding,
for the gain from it is better than gain from silver
and its profit better than gold.
She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honour (Proverbs 3: 13-16).

Not only man has to act in such a way,
the Lord by wisdom founded the earth (Proverbs 3: 19).

Wisdom has built her house,
she has set up her seven pillars (Proverbs 9: 1).

— in the very same way as the roofs of houses in the ancient Near East are made to rest upon seven pillars. The exhortation to act wisely is illustrated by the example of the ant:

Go to the ant, O sluggard;
consider her ways, and be wise.
Without having any chief,
officer or ruler,
she prepares her food in summer
and gathers her sustenance in harvest.
How long will you lie there, O sluggard?
When will you arise from your sleep?
A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
and poverty will come upon you like a vagabond,
and want like an armed man (6: 6-11).

This passage shows a fine sense of observation of nature; and the same quality was manifested also in the observation of human beings. The criticisms made by these writers of proverbs are most telling:

Under three things the earth trembles;
under four it cannot bear up!
a slave when he becomes king,

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and a fool when he is filled with food;
and unloved woman when she gets a husband,
and a maid when she succeeds her mistress
(Proverbs 30: 21-23).

Slothful and foolish people are frequently a target for cutting ridicule:

The sluggard says: 'there is a lion outside!
I shall be slain in the streets!' (Proverbs 22: 13).

Cantankerous women have particular reason to fear our aphoristic poets:

A foolish son is ruin to his father,
and a wife's quarrelling is a continual dripping
of rain (Proverbs 19: 13).

The relationship between the sexes is a popular theme:

Three things are too wonderful for me;
four I do not understand:
the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a serpent on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a maiden
(Proverbs 30: 18-19).

The sharp criticism of women probably led the man who compiled the whole collection to end with a eulogy of the good wife (Proverbs 31: 10 ff.).

What was understood by wisdom at that time is best expressed in the Book of Job:

No man knows the way to wisdom. It is not in the depths of the sea. It cannot be bought for gold and silver. It may be found in God alone (Job 28: 12 ff.).

The collections of proverbs are based upon the following principles: whoever lives wisely and piously is well off, his household thrives, and fortune smiles upon him. This outlook soon suggested a reversion of the principle that he who is badly off is necessarily a sinner. Life of course frequently taught the contrary, and this problem of 'why must a righteous man suffer?' led to the development of a singularly fine type of Old Testament poetry: the poetic part of the Book of Job. This is

encompassed by the popular part of the Book of Job, which is written in prose. It tells the story of a pious man by the name of Job who loses all his belongings, and finally even his children, but does not give up his devout attitude, with the result that he is finally given both children and possessions. Job is the main character in a work which grapples with the problem whether a man persecuted by misfortune need be a sinner.

In his misery Job is visited by three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, who discuss the reason for his misfortune in a three-part interlocution. This discussion begins with Job cursing the day of his birth:

Let the day perish wherein I was born,
and the night which said:
'A man-child is conceived.'

He would long ago have been in his grave, together with the mighty and the weak of this world, and would have had his rest, since life is no more than a sigh and a lamentation. Eliphaz is the first to reply. He reminds Job that, so long as he enjoyed good fortune, he had always helped unhappy people with advice. Misfortune was always the consequence of sin. Eliphaz tells of a dream he had, in which he was told that no man is righteous in the sight of God. Job should not chafe but should lay his case before God in a trusting spirit.

Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves;
therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty.
For he wounds, but he binds up;
he smites, but his hands heal (Job 5: 17 ff.).

Job is not satisfied with Eliphaz's words. He expresses disappointment that his friends do not try to understand him. For man life is but a vale of tears; will it have to go on thus for ever? God should turn away from him and leave him to die. But if his misery were the result of sin, then God should forgive him.

It is now Bildad's turn to speak. He turns against Job's words, which he compares with a 'strong wind'. Job had only lost his children on account of his sins. He should beseech God for mercy, and the Lord would no doubt help him. Job's reply sets out from the assumption that one cannot argue with God. He who moves mountains unnoticed, who overturns them in his anger, who shakes the earth out of its place so that its pillars tremble – he surely will pay no heed to Job's call. Nevertheless

he, Job, was innocent, for God destroys pious men as well as sinners. Indeed, he rejoices at the ruin of the innocent. Already when God created him he intended him to suffer innocently one day.

After these harsh words by Job it is understandable that Zophar's reply should be even more acrimonious than those of his two other friends. 'Should a man full of talk be vindicated?' he asks, enraged. 'But oh, that God would speak', then it would be easy to find Job guilty of his sins.

It [God's wisdom] is higher than heaven –
what can you do?
deeper than Sheol –
what can you know?

Job should trust in God and then it will be easier for him to cope with his sad plight.

The same thoughts are also expressed in the second and third conversations between Job and his three friends. None of them is able to convince the other. Afterwards Job describes in a lengthy allocution the life he has lived hitherto, his standing among his fellow citizens, his charitable attitude towards the poor, towards widows and orphans.

Now Elihu appears as a new partner in the conversation. He disagrees both with Job's arguments and with those of his three friends. Elihu emphasizes the fact that he himself is still a young man, but Job and his friends are already advanced in years. His attitude towards them is critical. It is not the aged who are the wisest, nor do they understand what is right. What does Elihu have to say about the question that is troubling Job? God, he says, has various ways of speaking to man, among others that of throwing him on to his bed of sickness; if he is converted, then he may be saved. But it is foolish to believe that a man can be completely free of sin. In particular nobody should entertain the illusion that by being pious or sinful he was either helping or harming God. Job should observe God's wonders in nature and bow before his authority.

Now God himself appears in a storm and gives Job to understand that he had no right to challenge or criticize his decision:

Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be justified?
Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his? (Job 40: 8-9).

In our estimation it is hardly a solution to the problem for God to intimidate Job with his omnipotence. For the God who appears here is not the merciful Christian god but a deity who gives man no right to contemplate his destiny or to try to bring it into harmony with the divine cosmic order. The Old Testament world inevitably failed to solve this problem. It did have the idea of the glorious 'last days', but this was to be a collective and impersonal phenomenon. The Christian idea of immortality was lacking.

The short story is best represented in the Biblical tale of Ruth. Ruth, the daughter of a Moabite, who has married an Israelite who had emigrated to Moab, returns to Israel after her husband's death, accompanied by her mother-in-law. Here she concludes a levirate marriage with a relative, so becoming one of David's ancestors. The tale is at the same time a protest against Ezra's harsh marriage laws, promulgated after the Jews returned out of exile (Ezra, ch. 9).

The content of the Book of Ecclesiastes (The Preacher) is entirely different. According to the title it is the work of a king of Israel, of a son of David – i.e., Solomon. This heading has, however, been added later; we do not know who composed this book, which must have been written during the period after the exile. Its basic idea may be summarized briefly: everything is idle, all the labours of man under the sun have no purpose; everything comes and goes in cyclical fashion, finally falling into oblivion. The whole tone of the book is deeply pessimistic. Even wisdom cannot give meaning to the life of the Preacher. 'For in much wisdom is vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow' (Ecclesiastes 1: 18). Riches he regards as empty, and even when he advises men to take pleasure in secular delights, this is not the last resort; for all is transient. Besides this the Preacher realizes that loneliness is an important reason for the sadness of existence.

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? (Ecclesiastes 4: 9-11).

And finally the Preacher also seems to have had unfortunate experiences with the opposite sex: 'One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found' (Ecclesiastes 7: 28).

However, interspersed here and there among all this pessimistic

reasoning, we find words that are in marked contradiction to the general tone of the book, and which proclaim subordination to God's will as the end of one's life. Everything stems from the hand of God; without him we can enjoy nothing (2: 24 ff.); in days of prosperity and in days of adversity one should say to oneself that everything comes from God (7: 13 ff.).

Attempts have been made to explain this obvious contradiction by the argument that the Preacher was once a deeply religious man who had fallen from the heights of faith into deep pessimism and a clearly marked contempt for life; but that his former belief occasionally still broke through. Opposed to this interpretation is another: that the religious elements which contradict the general theme of the book were added later by a writer who found it difficult to harmonize its pessimism with the Jewish belief in God. Others again see in this a dialogue between a pessimist and an optimist. At the end – probably also a later addition – is the exclamation of a reader who, finally growing anxious at so much erudition, says: 'Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.'

But the question still arises: how was it possible for a Jew of the post-exilic period to fall prey to such deep pessimism? We would probably not go far wrong in seeking the reason in the religious situation that prevailed at this time. The voices of the great prophets, who had once struck such a life-endorsing note, had long since been stilled. Their great and eternal world had been replaced by one governed by law and cult. And we can understand that a man such as the Preacher, in whose heart doubts began to make themselves felt, could obtain no help from that source and therefore succumbed ever further to an almost nihilistic train of thought.

Sometimes it has been maintained that the influence of Greek philosophy played a part in this. It is not necessary to draw such a conclusion. Similar pessimistic ideas are already to be found in earlier Babylonian texts. It is, of course, astonishing that a book of this kind should have been accepted into the canon of the Old Testament.

Belles-lettres in the broader sense of the term must also include historiography. The Books of Kings mention annals which unfortunately had already been lost even in ancient times: histories of the kings of the southern and northern Israelite kingdoms. Annals of this kind were also kept in the coastal cities of Syria.

Much of the Books of Samuel constitutes a unique historiographical achievement. The writing reaches heights that are found nowhere else, either in Palestine-Syria under the Canaanites or in the ancient Near East as a whole. Events involving Samuel, Saul and David are described in a vivid topical manner: one has the impression that the narrator of the story was present at the time. There is no trace of any tendency to introduce ideas of a later period.

The same power and vividness of description is evident in the narrative, which we call a legend, of the earliest times – the tales about Abraham, Jacob and Joseph that are contained in Genesis. They were formerly referred to as ‘ancestral sagas’. But it is now recognized that we have here neither a purely fictional narrative nor pure historical truth, but a mixture of the two. This assessment is based on the fact, mentioned above, that the authors of these accounts based their work upon accurate recollections of the events described. These legends are distinguished by yet another quality. Their authors are already acquainted with the teaching of Moses. An example of this occurs in the tales about Joseph. Joseph has attained high honour in Egypt. His brothers, who have come to Egypt to buy corn, meet him by chance without recognizing him. Finally he makes himself known to them. They are startled and fear his revenge, especially on account of their actions since the death of their father. But Joseph answers:

Fear not, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive (Genesis 50: 19 ff.).

Here we have God acting in history. Joseph’s words already anticipate those of the great prophets.

Letters, too, were written in a particular style. In II Kings 5: 6 (cf. 10: 2) a letter begins with the words: ‘When this letter reaches you . . .’ This introductory formula is reminiscent of that used in ancient Babylonian letters. A letter found at Tell ed-Duweir begins differently: ‘May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of good . . .’ Unfortunately not many letters of this period have survived. The material used was leather or papyrus, and it has not withstood the ravages of time.

Was there any trace of scientific thinking in Palestine-Syria during the first millennium BC? Evidence of tentative beginnings in this sphere have indeed been found. It came as a great surprise to the excavators of Tell

ed-Duweir in southern Palestine when they discovered two human skulls bearing traces of surgical operations. On one of the apertures made in the skull it was still possible to identify the scar of a wound; the man concerned must therefore have survived this operation. The question arises whether this operation was performed for medical or for religious reasons: i.e., whether it was believed that by making such an incision one could help a sick man to recover, or whether the view held was that such an operation would ward off the demons who were troubling the man's spirit (plate 56).

In speaking of science, mention must be made of the introduction of a calendar. We have ample information about this in Old Testament sources, which list the names of the individual months. The ancient Israelites reckoned the length of the month according to the moon ($29\frac{1}{2}$ days between successive new moons), as may be inferred from the fact that in Hebrew the words for moon and month are the same. The existence of a thirty-day month is confirmed by the discovery at Tell ed-Duweir of the so-called 'month tablet'. This was a tablet carved from bone, with a loop whereby it could be suspended, pierced by three rows of ten holes, each hole doubtless indicating one day. Since a similar piece has been found at Tell el-Farah in southern Palestine, this must have been a common aid for counting the thirty days of the month. Another interesting find, the 'calendar inscription', was made during excavations at Gezer. This is a limestone tablet bearing the following words, in the Old Semitic script and the Hebrew language:

Two months are harvest,
two months are planting,
two months are late planting,
one month is hoeing up flax,
one month is harvest of barley,
one month is harvest and measuring [of fruit],
two months are vine-tending,
one month is summer fruit.

This is no doubt a calendar designed for the use of peasants, which lists the most important tasks that had to be carried out each month.

The Israelite calendar was divided into days and weeks; the latter ended with a day of rest. The months were at first referred to by a number, but in the fifth century Babylonian names came into use. In earlier times Palestine-Syria had also had its own names for the months.

The difference between the lunar and solar year was offset by leap months; it is not certain, however, when this became common practice. The year was also divided after a fashion by the festivals that were celebrated. The day of the new moon was marked by a communal meal and by making it a day of rest. There were feasts in commemoration of the exodus from Egypt; seven weeks later came the feast of seven weeks, then the feast of the tabernacle and the New Year feast; the latter was celebrated in autumn. There were also popular feasts which did not appear in the official calendar. Women of the tribe of Benjamin would wander about for four days wailing; a later tradition linked this custom with the death of Jephthah's daughter. At Silo, an annual festival took place in which young girls performed a kind of round dance. Every year sacrifice was made at a sanctuary. It is clear that many of these Israelite feasts were adopted from the Canaanites.

EPILOGUE: PENETRATION BY GREECE AND ROME

Whereas the Israelites who were deported to Assyria in 722 BC disappeared without trace in the ethnic melting-pot of this vast empire, the inhabitants of the southern kingdom who were carried off to Babylonia in 597 and 587 preserved their unity as a people. The chief reasons for this were that they were settled in compact groups on the outskirts of large towns, that they could earn their own livelihood, even though they were doubtless overburdened by taxation, and that very soon the political pressure exerted by the Babylonian régime diminished. The view that those deported to Babylonia did not fare too badly is supported by the fact that about half of them stayed on there when Cyrus's edict permitted the Jews to return to Palestine; even in later times Jewish-sounding names constantly recur in Babylonian commercial documents. One of the most important reasons for the survival of the Jewish people was that real religious and political leaders arose among those exiled to Babylonia. Mention must first of all be made of the prophet Ezekiel, who had been deported to Babylonia in 597 BC. Initially, before the destruction of Jerusalem, he raised his voice in warning, and from far-off Babylonia urged his people wandering about their homeland to have nothing to do with the political intrigues of the rival great powers. But when the catastrophe occurred in 587, and most men had doubtless lost courage, it was Ezekiel who time and again sought to revive their faith in a better future. His preaching reached its climax in the idealized picture which he drew of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, thus creating for his people, those in exile as well as those still living in their old homeland, a new religious and national symbol – albeit one that could not yet be realized in practice.

In addition to Ezekiel, some anonymous writers kept alive their

people's hope of a speedy homecoming. Most noteworthy is the prophet whose work was appended to that of the eighth-century prophet Isaiah (chapters 40 ff.). In one image after another he predicted his people's return: valleys would rise, mountains would fall, so that a way might be made for the faithful.

The hour of homecoming struck sooner than its prophets probably dared to hope. In 539 BC Babylonia was conquered by the combined forces of the Persians and the Medes. Under Cyrus the Persians came into the Babylonian inheritance not only in Mesopotamia but also in the lands they had conquered as far afield as Egypt. The attitude of the Persian rulers towards the peoples of this area was quite different from that of their Babylonian predecessors. All the peoples who had been deported were allowed to return home, the Jews among them. In 538 Cyrus issued an edict which permitted the Jews to return and to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem, and also ordered that they should be given back the cult objects that had been taken from the building.

Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel . . . ; and let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem' (Ezra 1: 2-4).

True, the new Temple in Jerusalem was not built as quickly as many enthusiasts no doubt hoped. Almost twenty years elapsed before work began on it in earnest, but then it was completed within five years. It was not rebuilt exactly as it had been before, or as Ezekiel had dreamed in exile that it would be; nevertheless the Jewish people had every reason to celebrate the occasion. Once again they had a focal point for their religious and national feeling. This applied not only to the Jews in Palestine but also to those living in the diaspora, in Babylonia and Egypt. Admittedly, conditions in Palestine at that time were far from ideal. The lofty monotheism taught by the prophets had ceased to exist; leadership had passed to the priests, who, in contrast to the great prophets, laid emphasis mainly upon ritual. In the Jerusalem community there was a sizeable number of foreigners who had entered the country after 587; many Jews had taken non-Jewish wives. In practice

there were no longer any differences between the Jews and their neighbours, from whom they had previously taken such pains to distinguish themselves. This development was facilitated by the liberal and tolerant spirit of Persian rule.

The reaction against the prevailing atmosphere in the Jewish community in Palestine was embodied in the person of Ezra, who returned to the country from Babylonia in the middle of the fifth century, accompanied by a group of Jews who had stayed behind there; he bore a mandate from the Persian king authorizing him to reform the community at Jerusalem. His abrupt reforms – henceforward the cult became the central act in every religious service – gave Jewry what were to be its characteristic features during the centuries that followed. Of the reforms affecting the life of the individual the most far-reaching were his matrimonial laws. These reached their apogee in the demand that Jewish husbands should divorce their non-Jewish wives, who should be obliged to leave the community, together with their children. These laws were carried into effect over the protests of a small minority. But when Ezra thereupon began to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the Persian authorities began to look upon his activities in a different light. Ezra was summoned to the Persian capital to explain his conduct, and never returned to Palestine. His effort to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem cannot have been the only reason why he lost the Persian king's favour; this tolerant government must also have taken exception to his matrimonial laws.

Ezra's successor was Nehemiah. Perhaps he was more diplomatic in his relations with the Persian court: in any case, he managed both to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to put through all Ezra's legislation. Consequently one may justifiably consider Nehemiah to be the man who laid the keystone of the Jewish faith in its established form. Henceforward law and ritual stood in the very centre of religious life; the lofty world of the prophets was no more.

Towards the end of Persian rule the Samaritan community near Shechem seems to have finally separated itself from Jerusalem and to have built a temple of its own on Mount Gerizim. The reason for the schism was certainly the promulgation of Ezra's matrimonial laws, for the Samaritans were a mixed people descended from the Israelites who remained in the country after 722 and who intermingled with the foreign tribes settled there by the kings of Assyria.

The Babylonians had inherited the empire of the Assyrians, the Persians that of the Babylonians. The legacy of the Persians in turn fell to Alexander the Great, who in the latter half of the fourth century BC made himself master of the Near East by a campaign in which he won a rapid succession of victories. The territories over which he ruled likewise stretched from the Zagros mountains to Upper Egypt; as under the Assyrian kings in the seventh century, Egypt, Palestine-Syria and Mesopotamia suddenly found themselves once again under the control of a single authority dominating the land route from Africa to Asia. But Alexander's triumphs meant more than just the military conquest of a vast empire. His soldiers were followed by Greek merchants, architects, scholars and artists who transformed the appearance of the ancient lands of the Near East, with their thousands of years of history. The fusion of Greek civilization with that of the conquered Orient gave rise to a new cultural movement which we call Hellenism, and which was to determine the character of the area until the Islamic invasions of the eighth century AD.

The death of Alexander the Great heralded the break-up of his empire and the start of the civil war of the Diadochi. Egypt came under the Ptolemies and Syria under the Seleucids. The Jews of Palestine, naturally enough, did not remain unaffected by these political changes. No sooner had Alexander died than the Ptolemies seized Jerusalem, but were unable to hold it. By about 200 BC it had become clear that the Seleucids of Syria would remain masters of Palestine. These struggles, it is true, did not cause the Palestine Jews any undue concern; after all, they had been living under foreign rule for three hundred years. They did become involved in a bitter political conflict, but the cause of this lay elsewhere. A large number of Jewish believers had come under the influence of Greek philosophy and interpreted the Old Testament in the Greek manner. This gradually led to a split between the liberal Jews based on Alexandria and the orthodox Jews in Jerusalem.

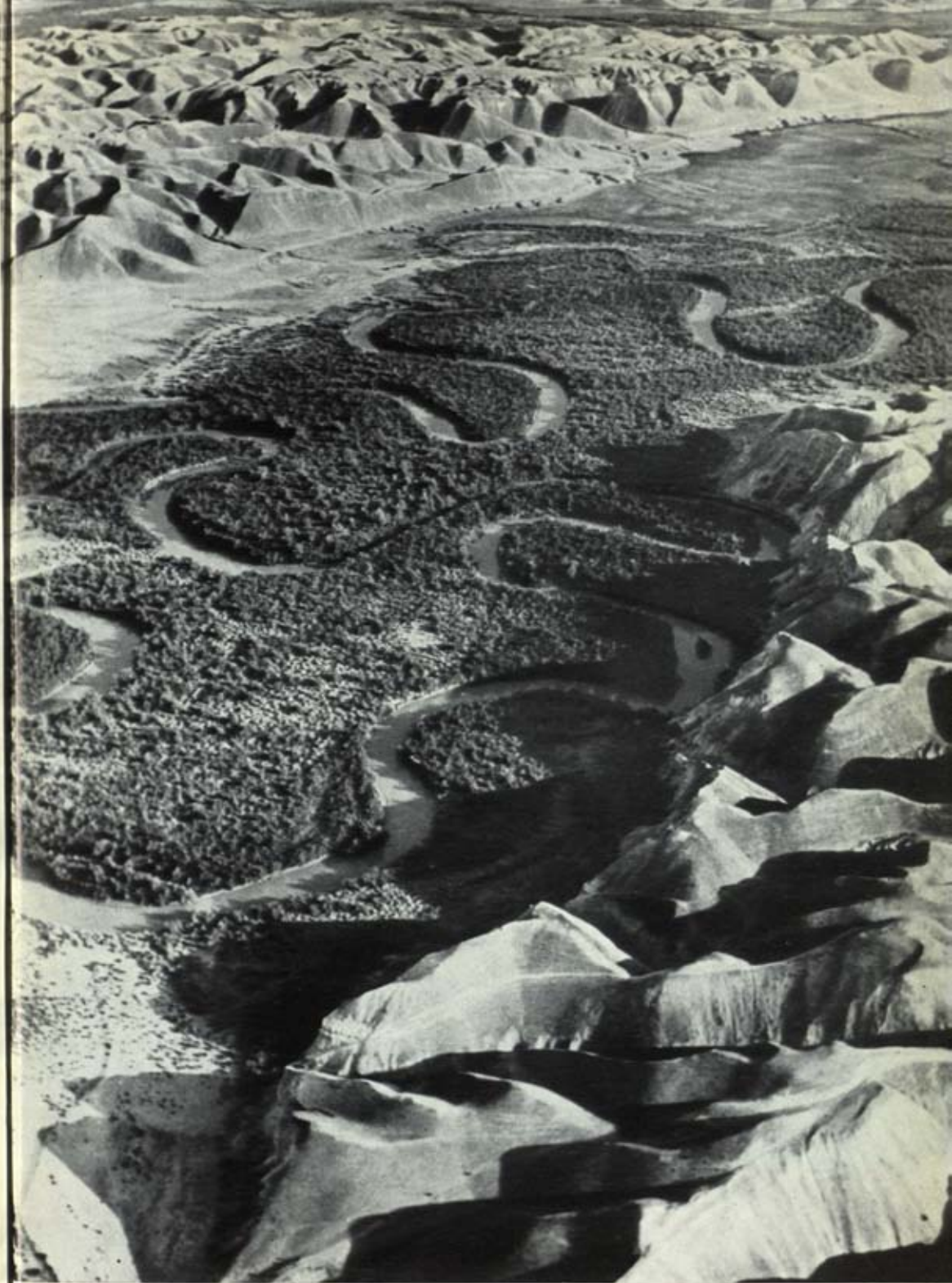
When the liberal minority in Jerusalem tried to obtain control of the city with the aid of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC), and the latter did not shrink from plundering and desecrating the Temple, this provoked serious conflicts that lasted for decades. They are known to history as the Maccabaeen Wars. Finally the orthodox succeeded in winning back almost all the territory that had formerly belonged to David's kingdom. The population was ruthlessly subjected and forcibly circumcized as an external sign of their incorporation into Jewry.



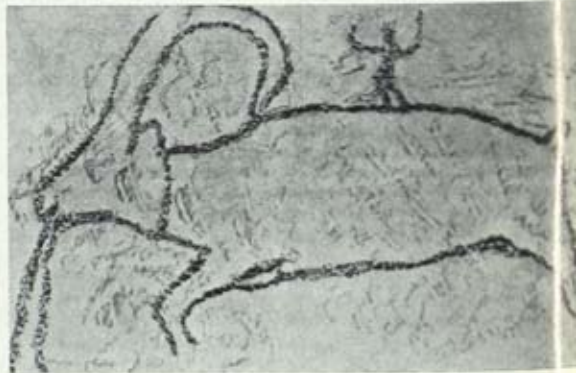
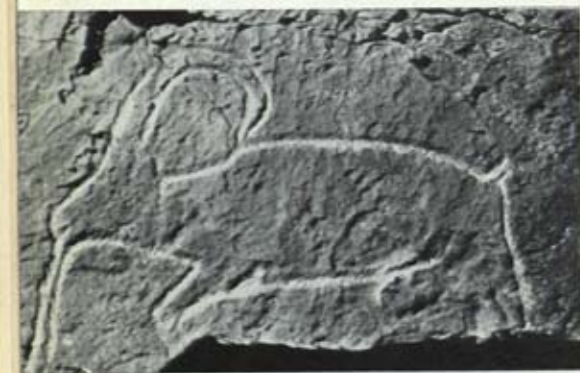
1 Fertile country: the Plain of Jezreel



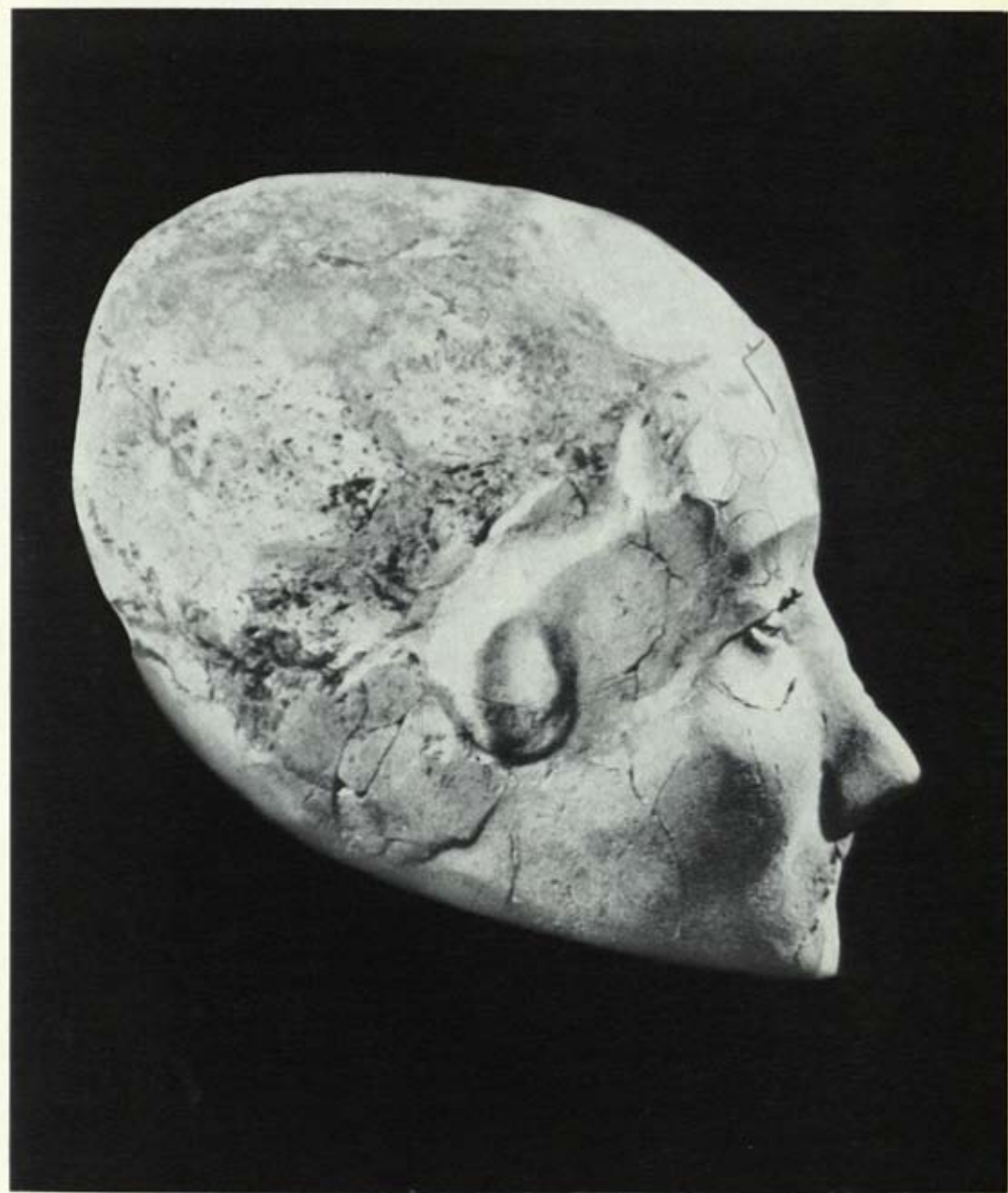
2 A desert of rock and salt: Jebel Usdum, at the southern tip of the Dead Sea



3 Vegetation in the desert: Jordan valley landscape



4 Dolmens in Transjordan; Prehistoric petroglyph from Kilwa



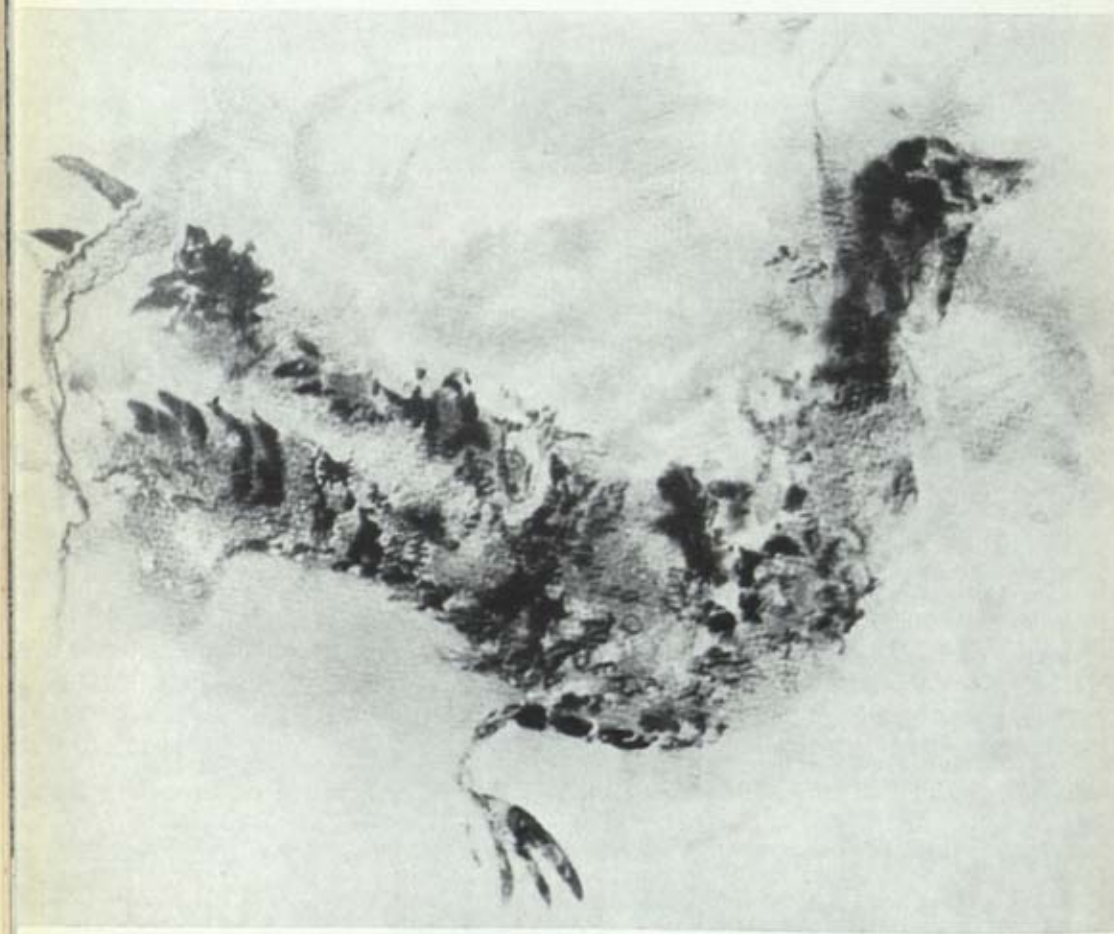
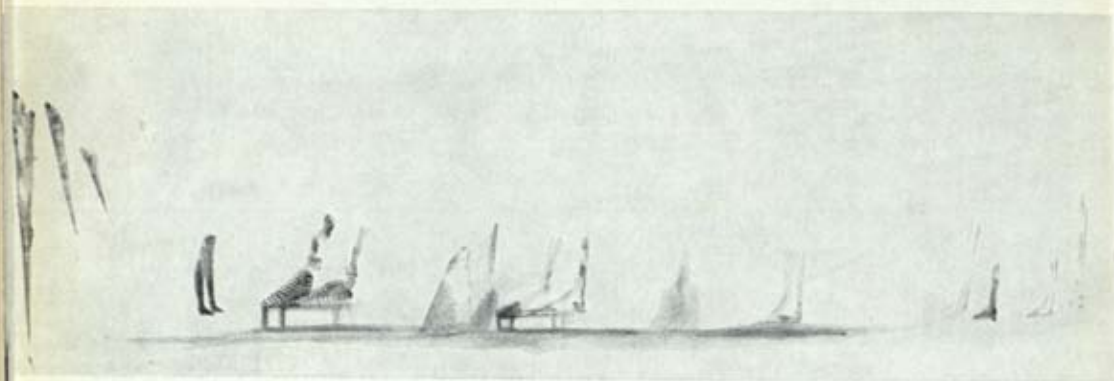
5 Modelled skull from Stone Age Jericho



6 Clay head from Stone Age Jericho



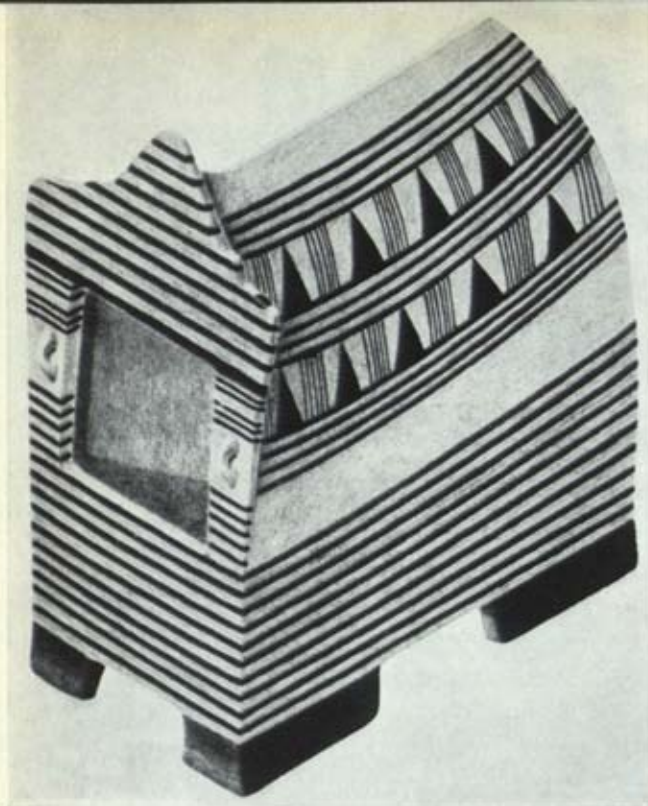
7 Above: house-urn from Hederah; below: Stone Age fortification in Jericho



8 Paintings from Telcilat el-Ghassul

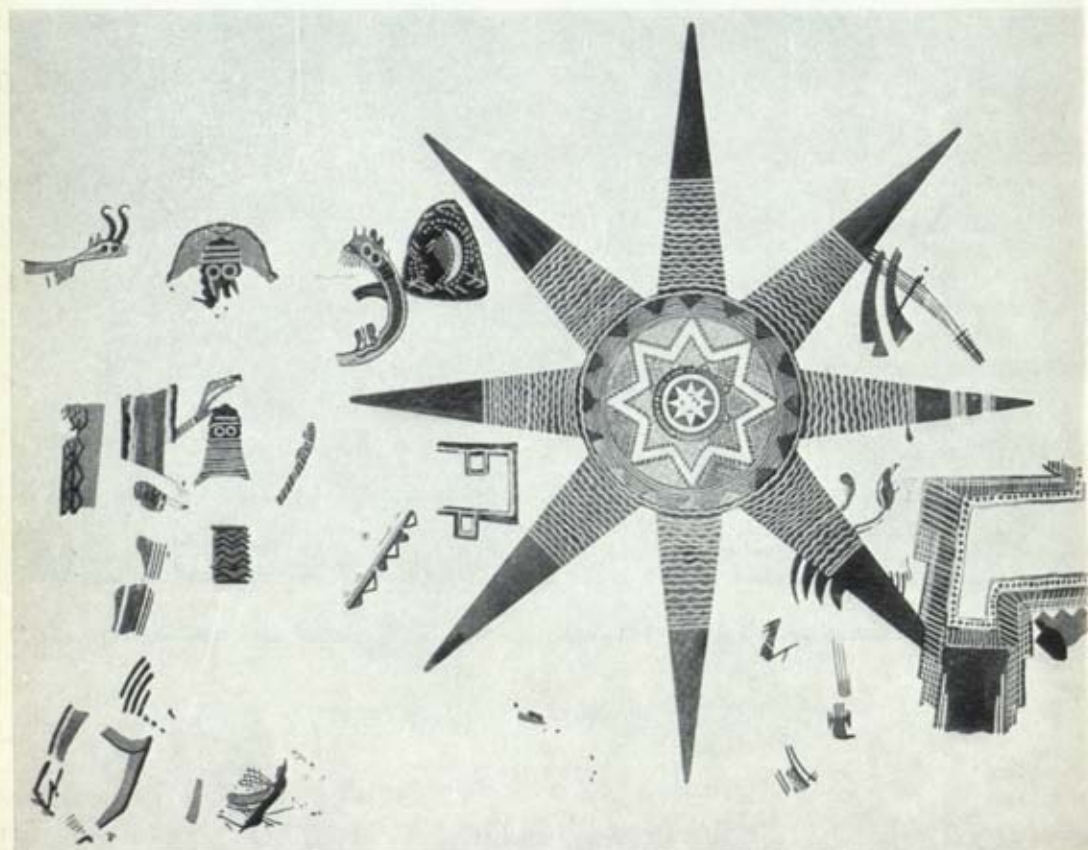


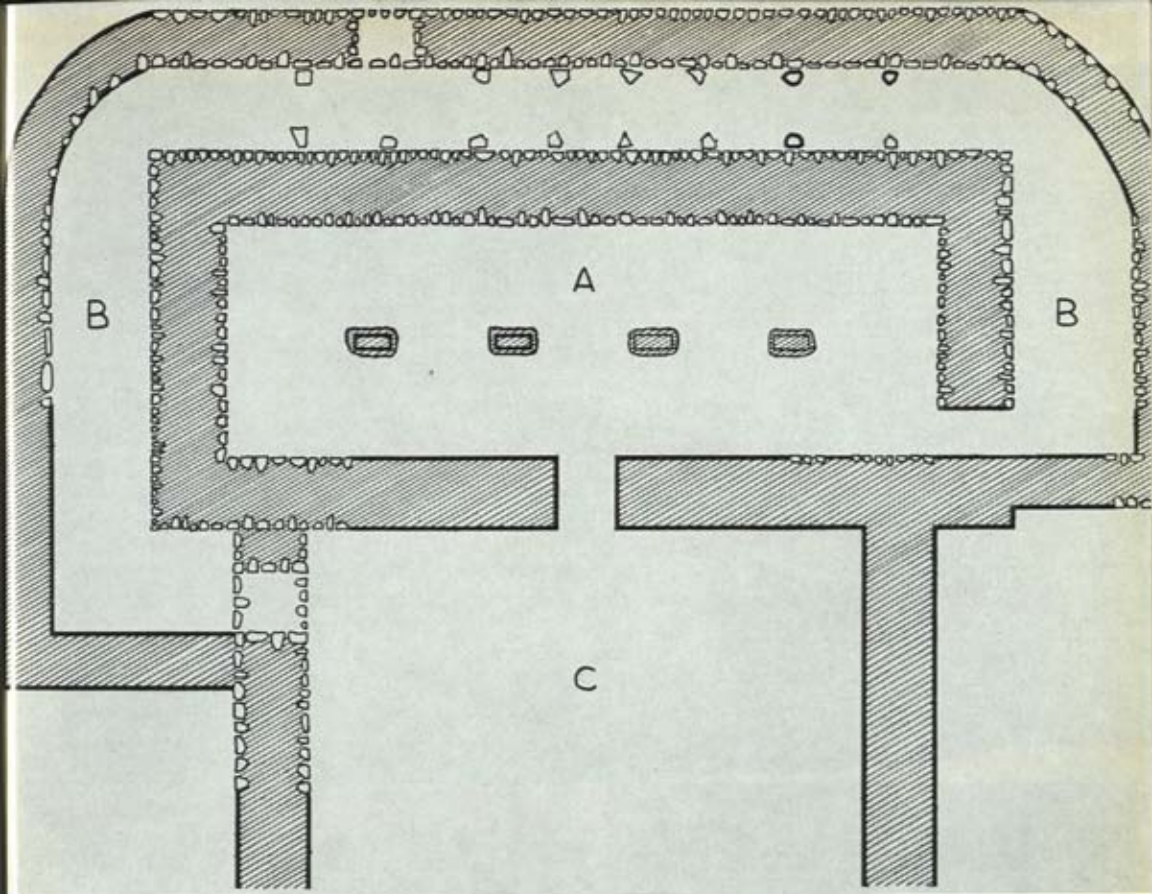
9 Head of a demon, from Telcilat el-Ghassul

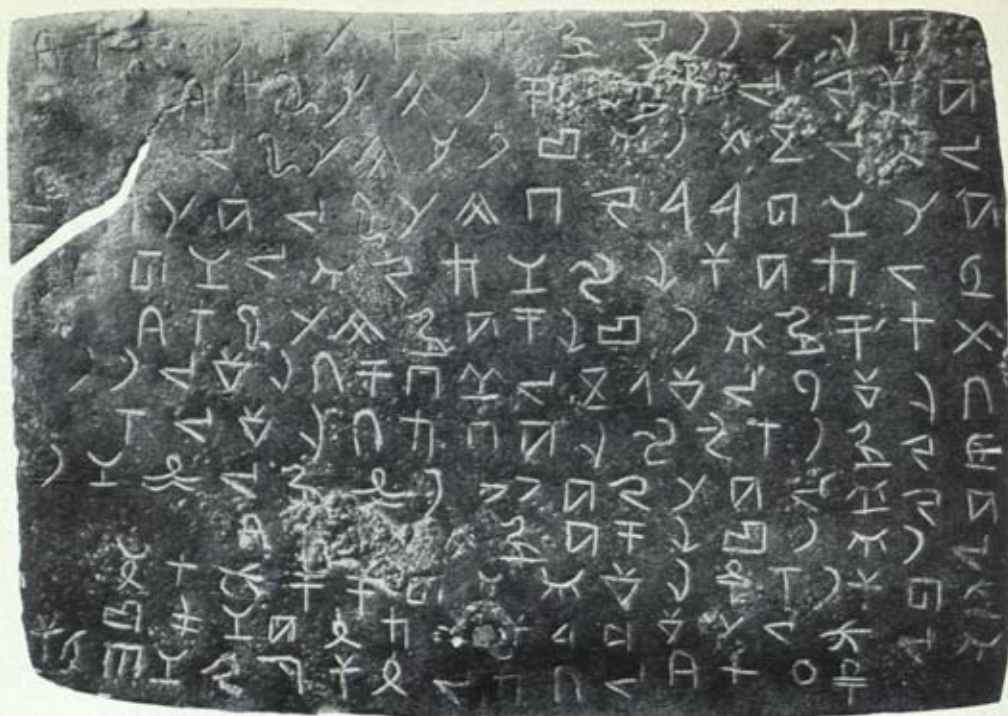


10 *Left: house-urn from Hederan;
below: paintings from Teleilat
el-Ghassul*

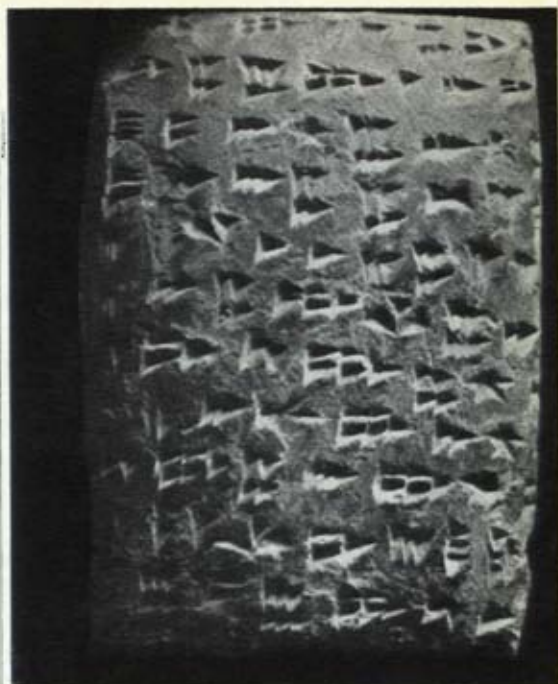
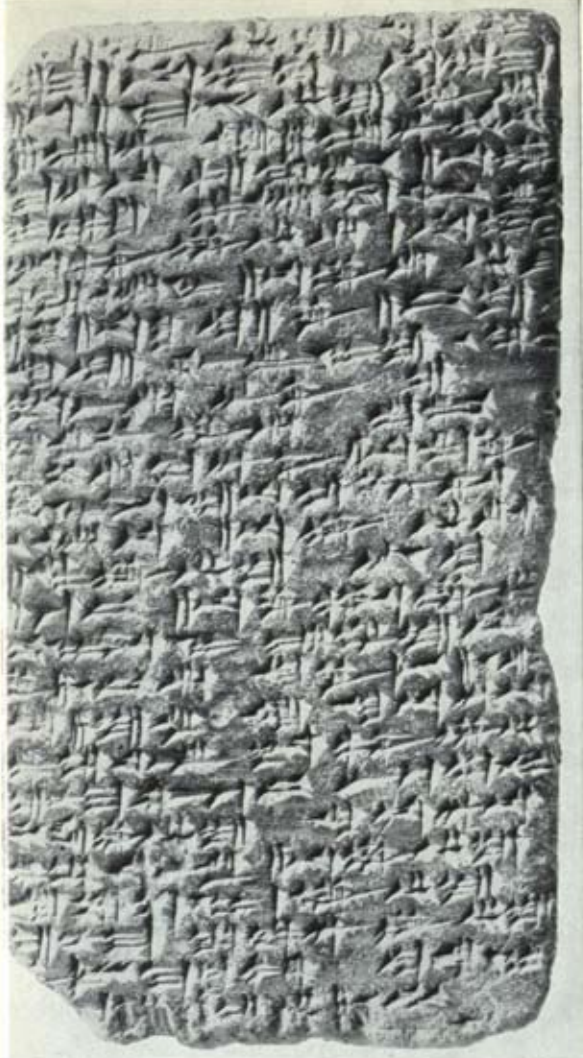
11 *Opposite: The palace at Ai.
Above: the plan, and (below) the
side gallery*



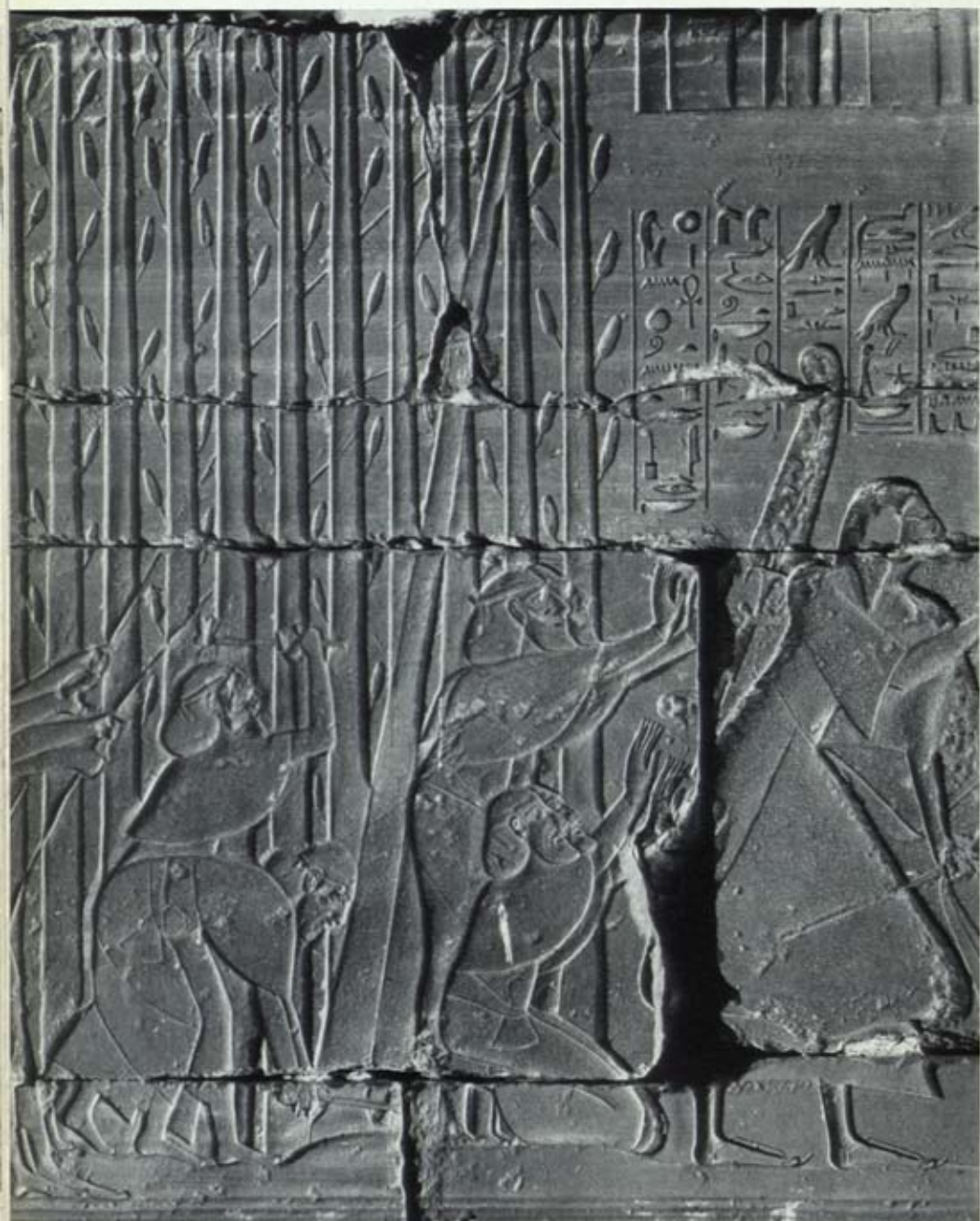




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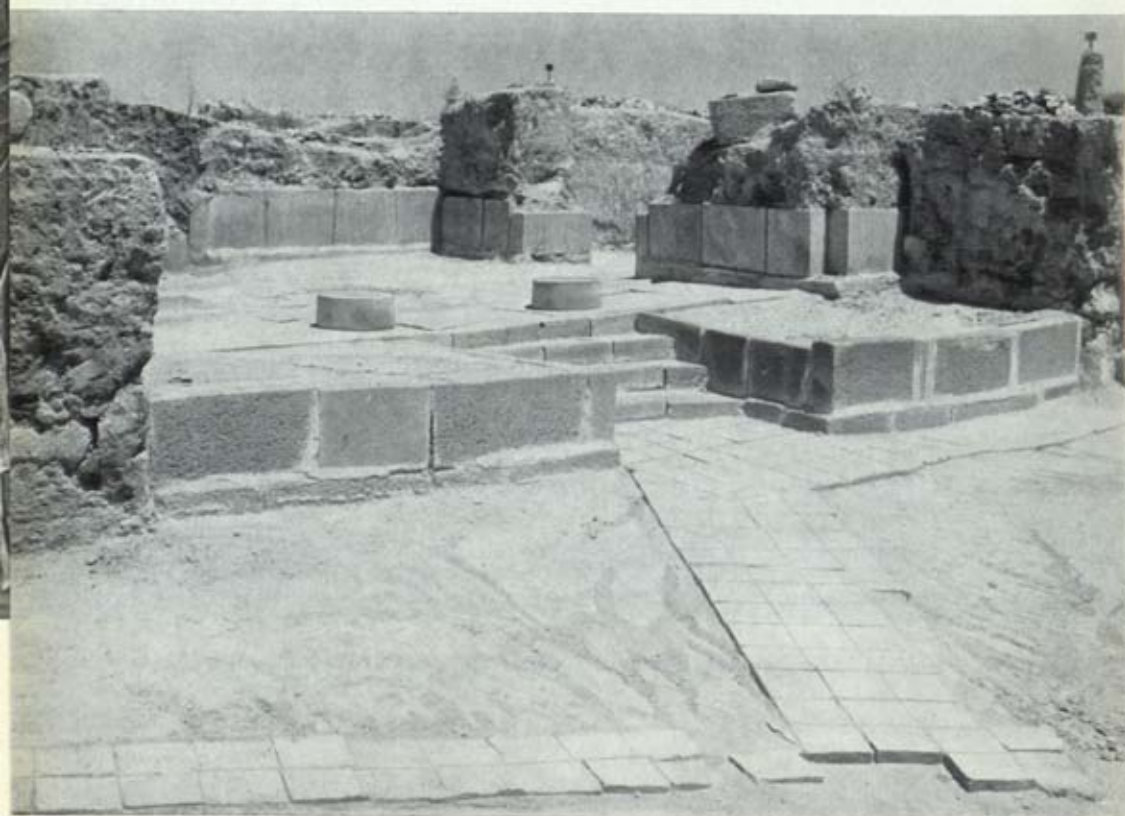
13 *Left: letter in cuneiform script from King Abdu-Heba of Jerusalem; above right: Ugaritic script on clay; below right: Old Semitic inscription from Gezer*



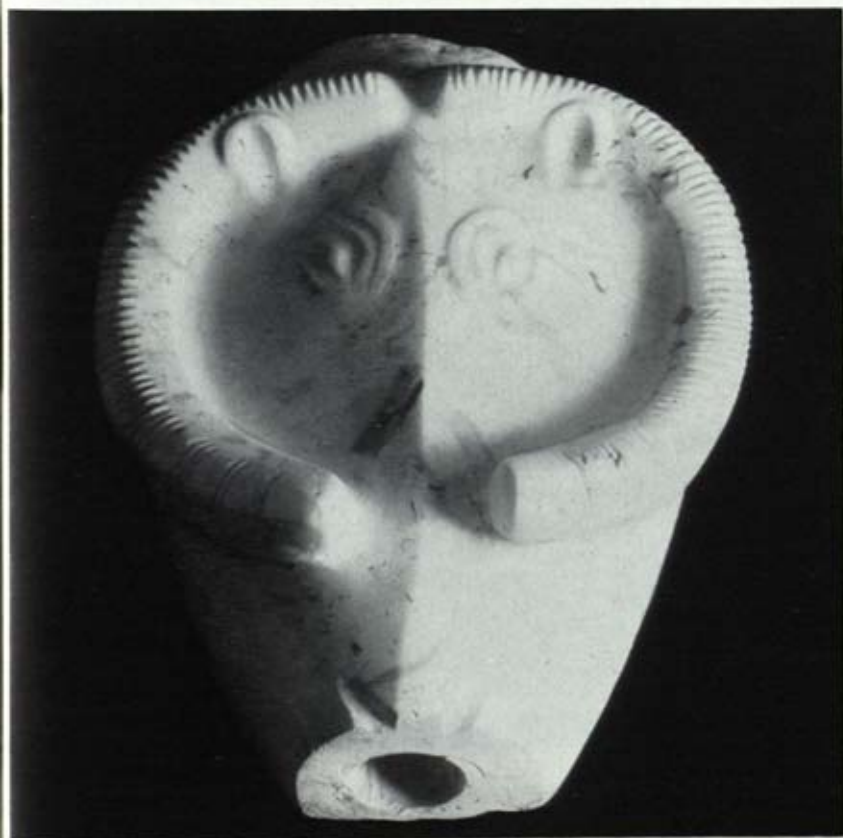
14 Egyptian relief. Princes of the Lebanon felling cedars for Seti I.



15 Above: model of a barque from Byblos; below: sarcophagus of King Ahiram of Byblos



16 Alalakh. Two basalt lions, and the columned hall in the palace



17 Alalakh. Bust of a king, and ram's head in marble



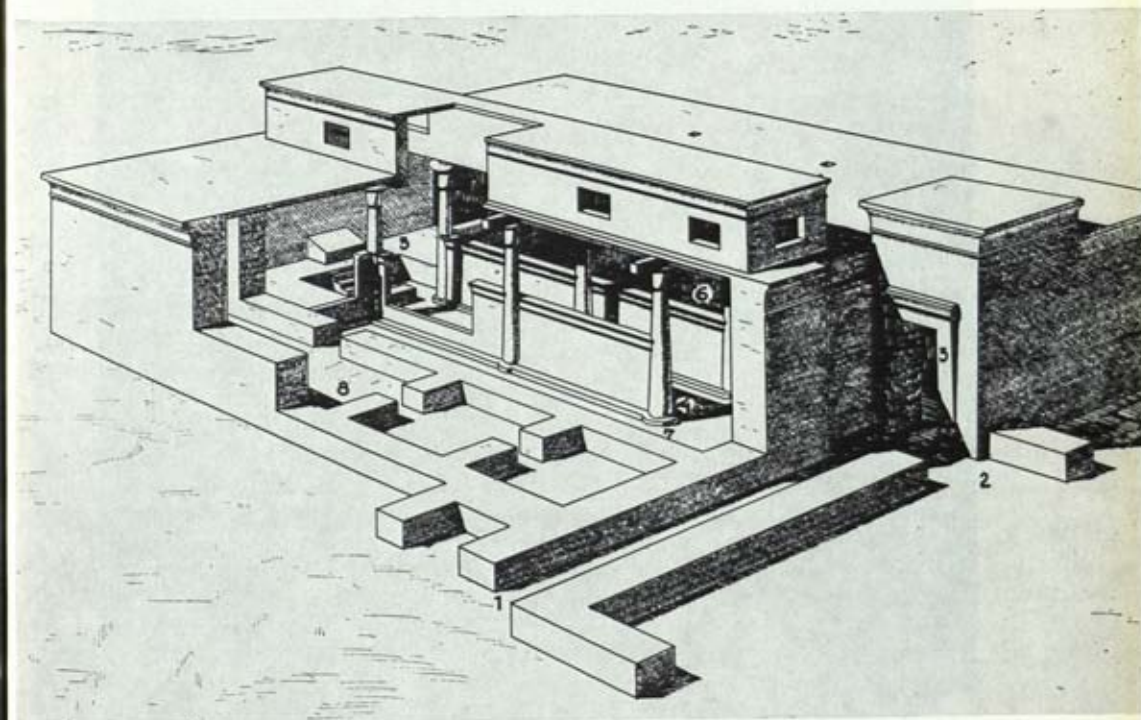
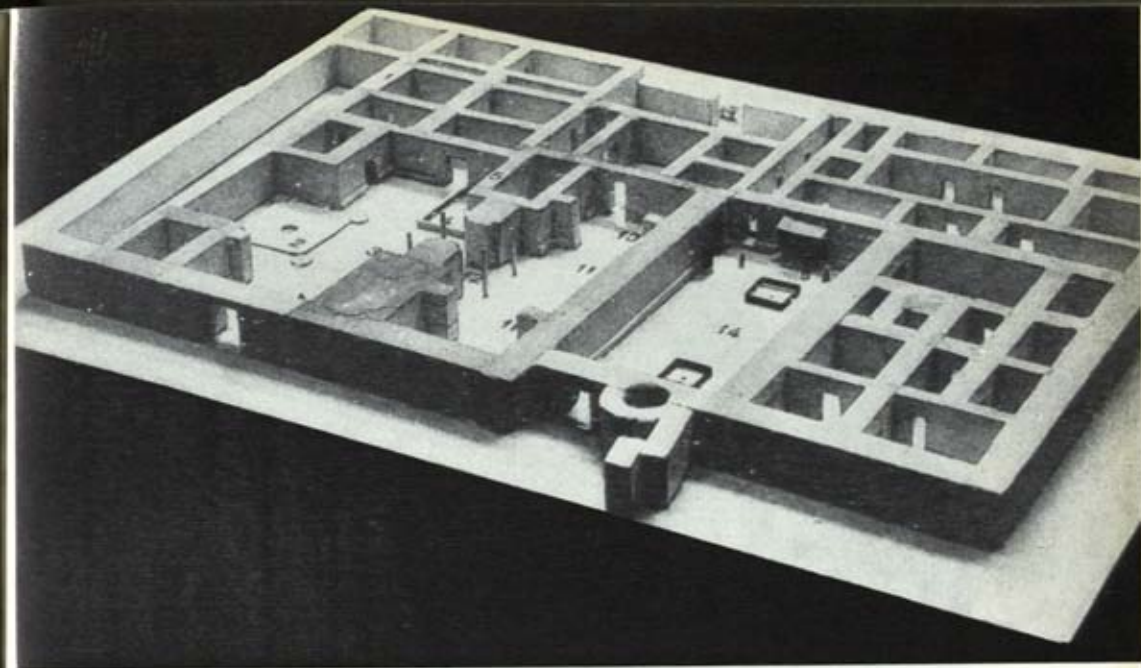
18 Statue of King Idrimi of Alalakh



19 Egyptian figure of an inhabitant of Palestine, inscribed with an 'execration text'



20 Lion-plaque from Beth-Shan



21 Reconstructions of the temples at Qatna and Beth-Shan



22 Incense-burning altar from Taanach



23 Incense-burning altar from Byblos



24 Altar (*above*) and bronze cult vessel from Ugarit



25 Mycenaean domed tomb at Ugarit (*above*), and (*below*) the entrance to a similar tomb



26 Statuette of a god from Ugarit



27 Statuette of a god from Ugarit



28 Goddess from Ugarit



29 Two figures on a chariot, from Ugarit



30 Stele from Ugarit



31 Stele from Ugarit



32 *Left: small ivory head
from Megiddo;
below: weight in the form
of a head, from Ugarit*



33 *Opposite: Axe and golden
bowl from Ugarit*

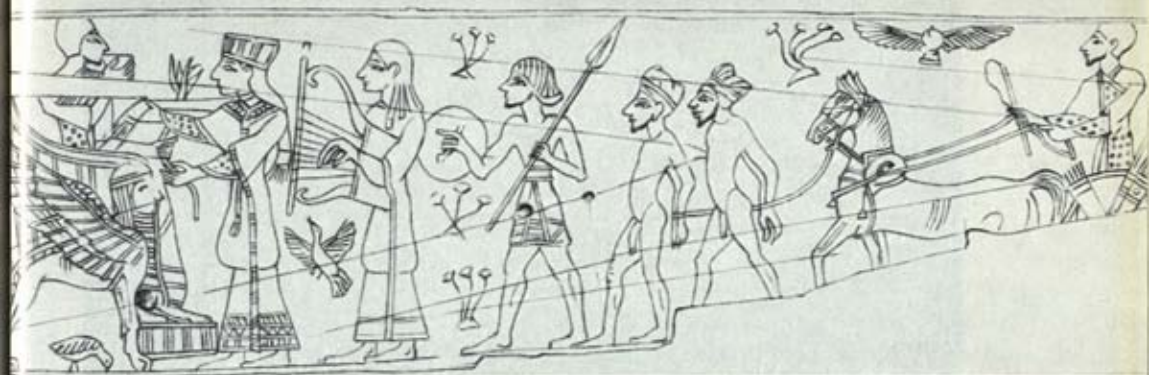






35 Ivory carving from Megiddo



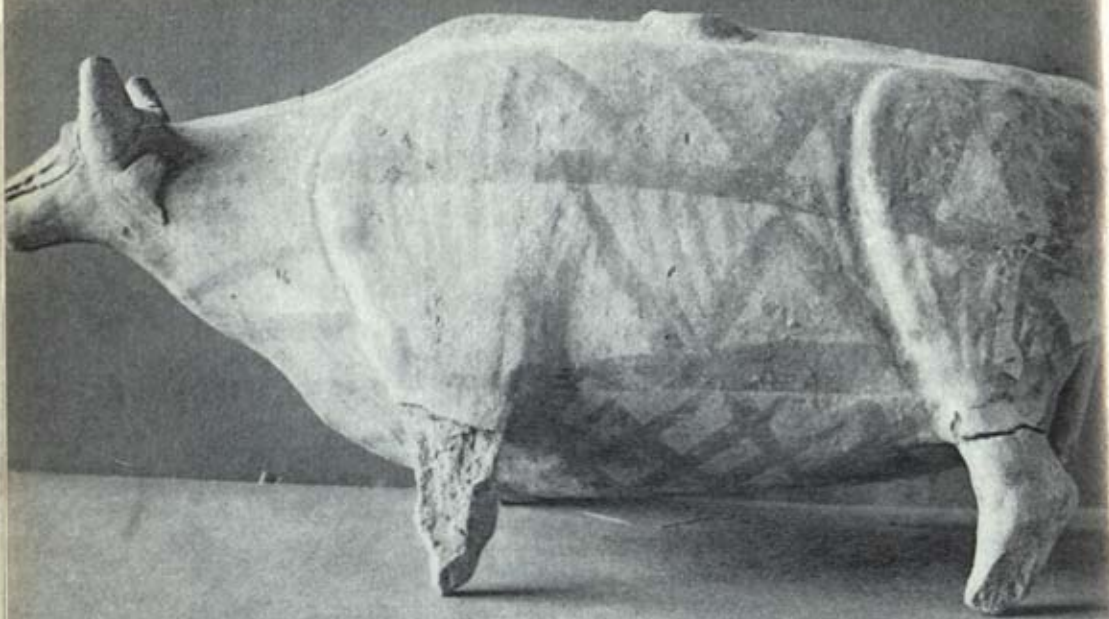




38 Ivory scent bottle from Tell el-Duweir



39 Portrait vases from Byblos (*above*) and Jericho



40 Vessel from Byblos (*above*) and jug from Jericho (*below*) in the shape of animals



41 Clay rhytons in the shape of a fish (*above*) and a hedgehog



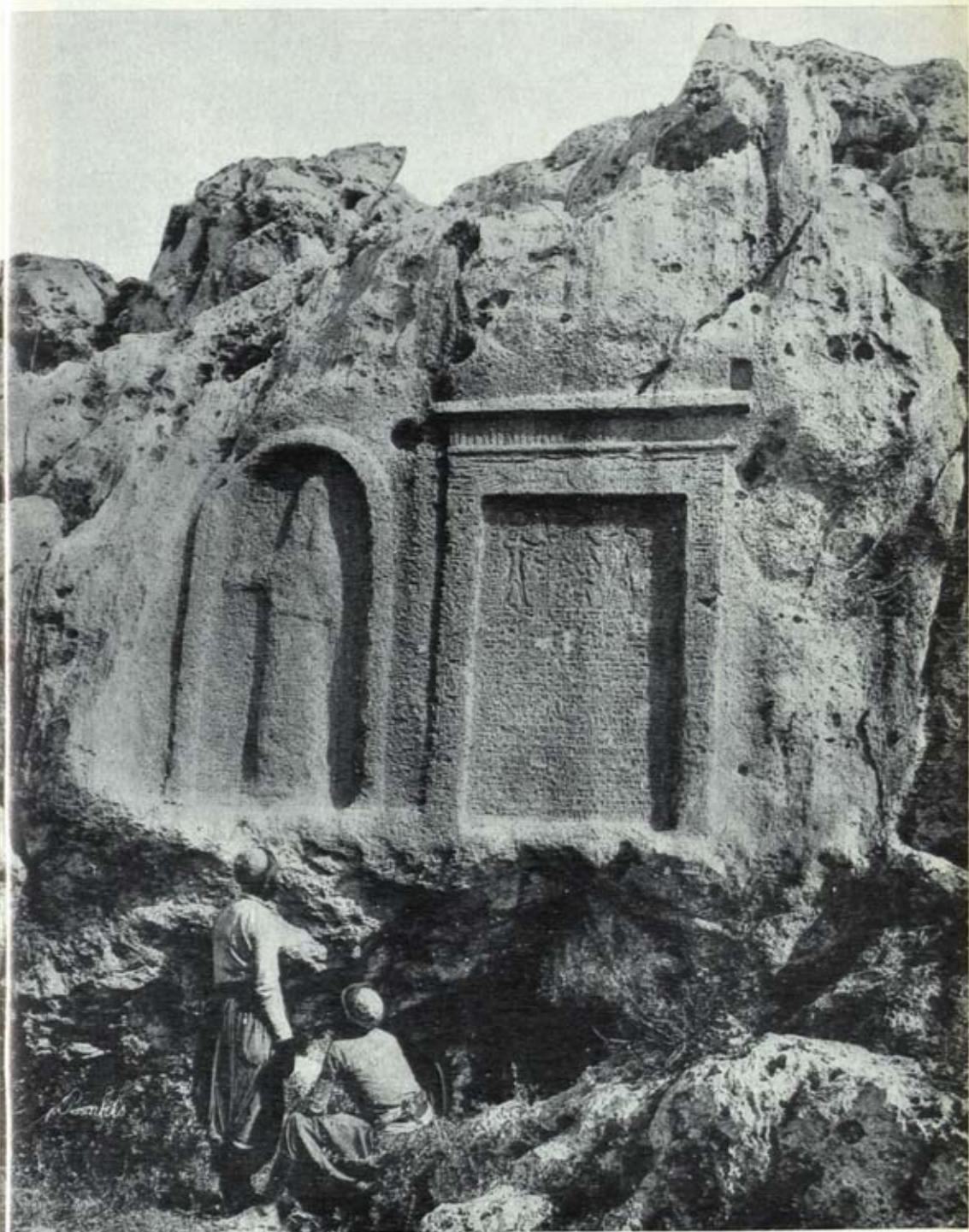
42 Above: Mycenaean stirrup vase from Ugarit; below:
stirrup vase from Jett

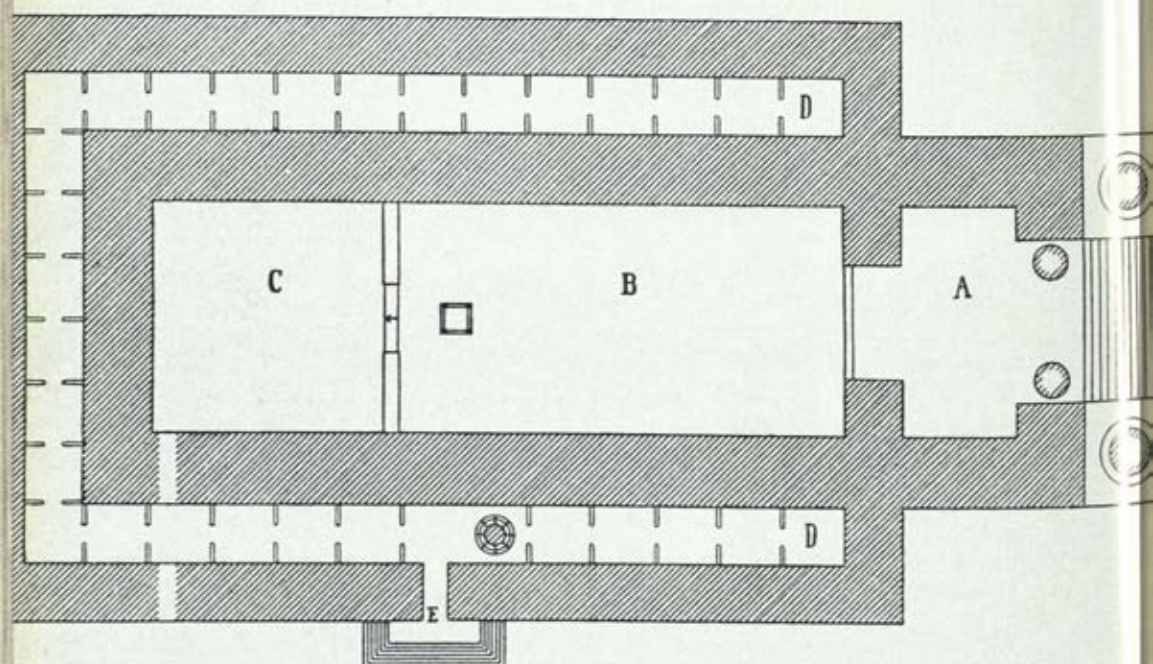
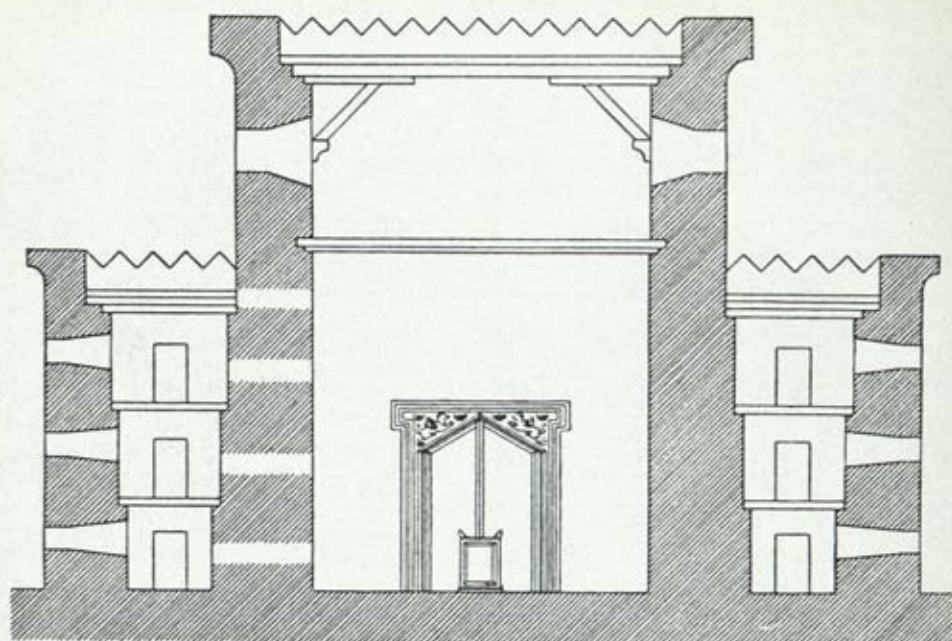


43 Seated goddess, from Beirut

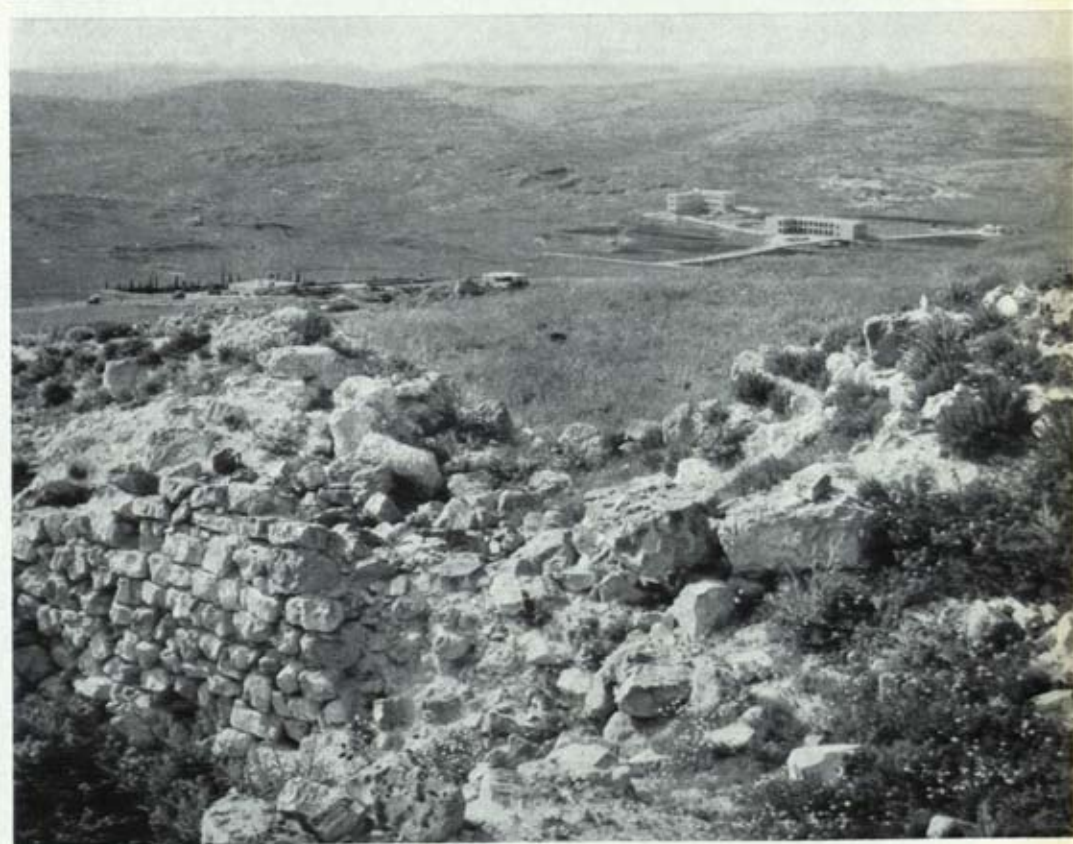


44 Tunnel for the water-supply at Megiddo





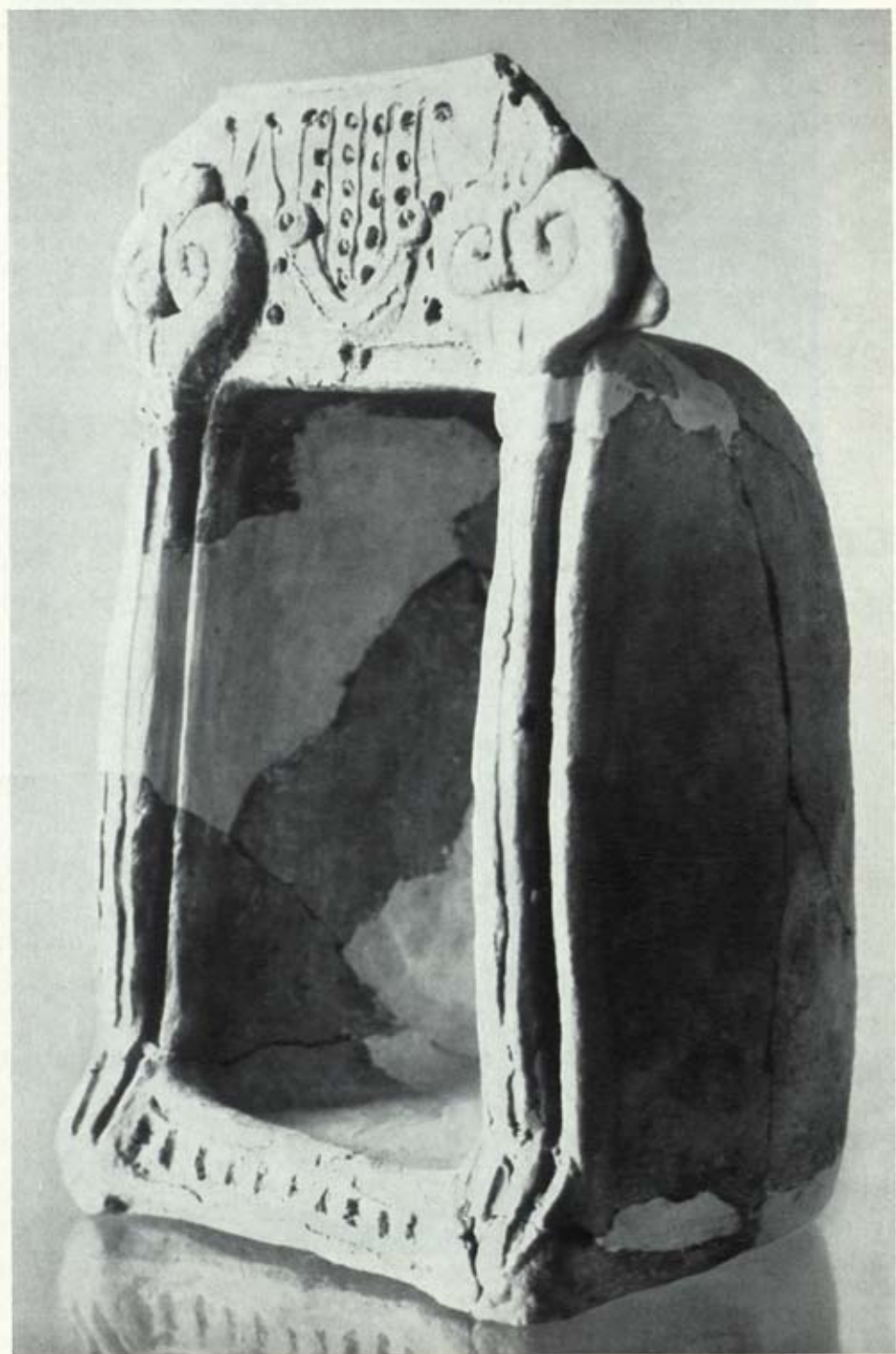
46 Cross-section and plan of the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem



47 *Above: 'Moses' Mountain' on the Sinai peninsula; below: 'Saul's Fortress' at Tell el-Ful, near Jerusalem*



48 Stele of King Mesha of Moab, from Diban



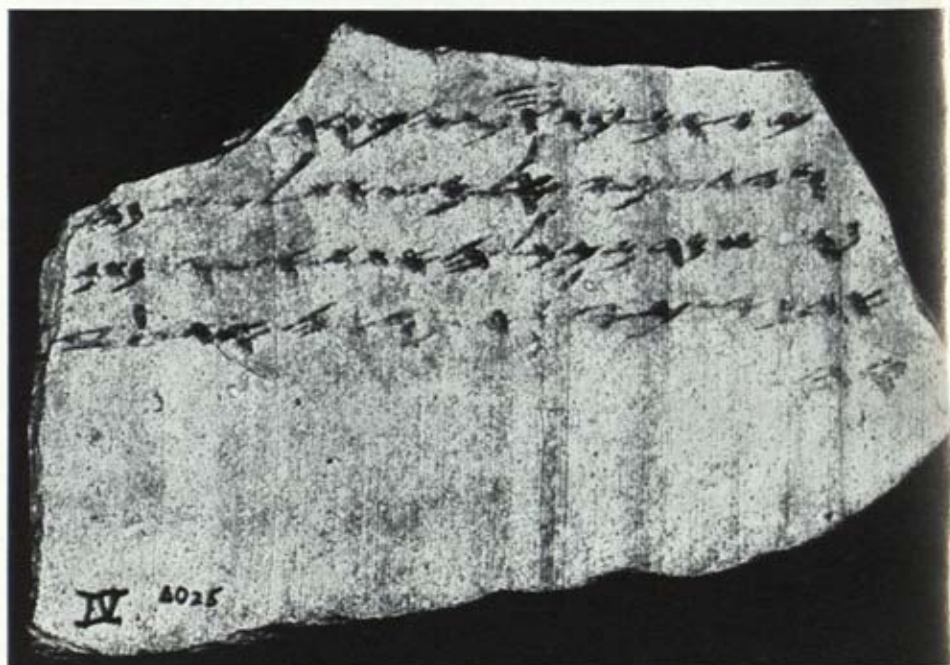
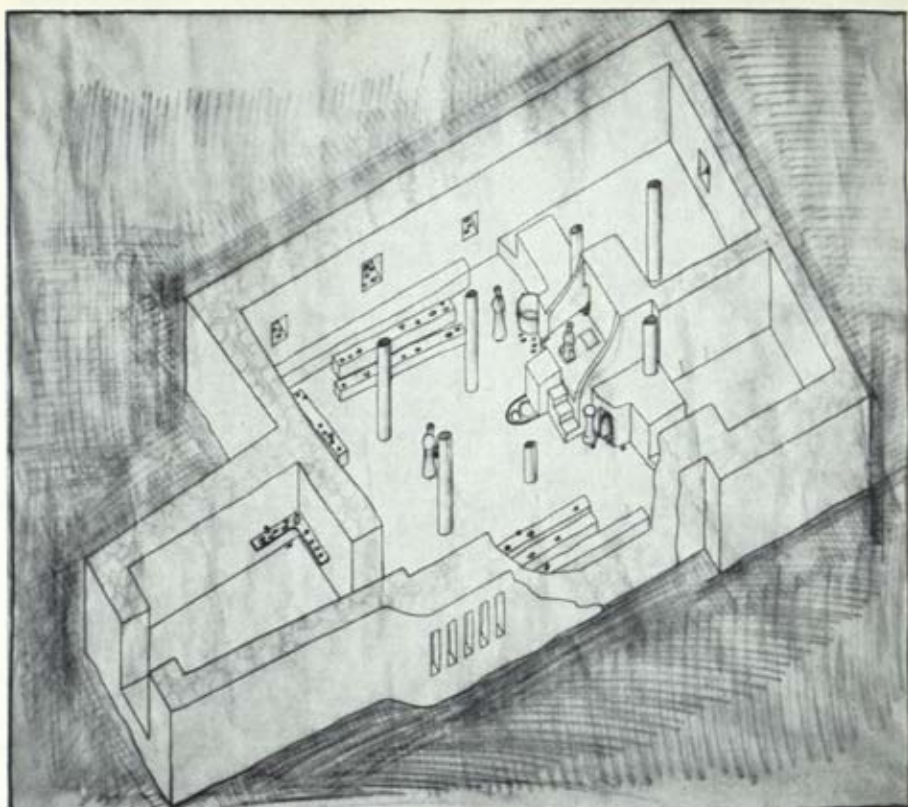
49 Model of an Israelite house altar from Tell el-Far'ah



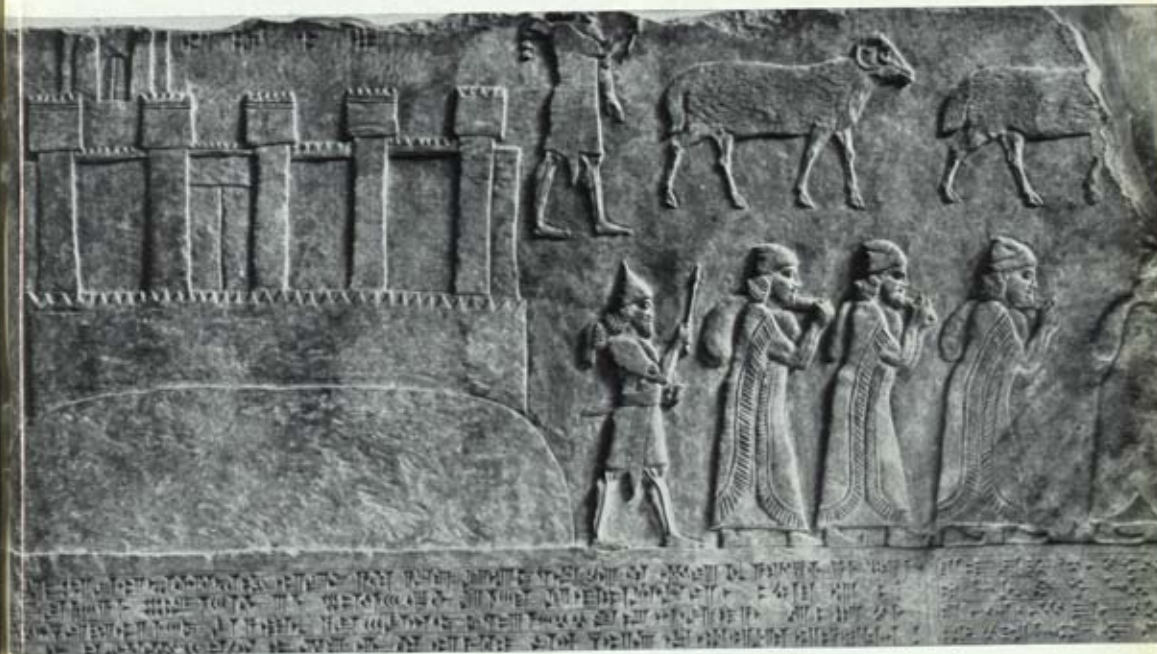
50 Royal statue from Amman



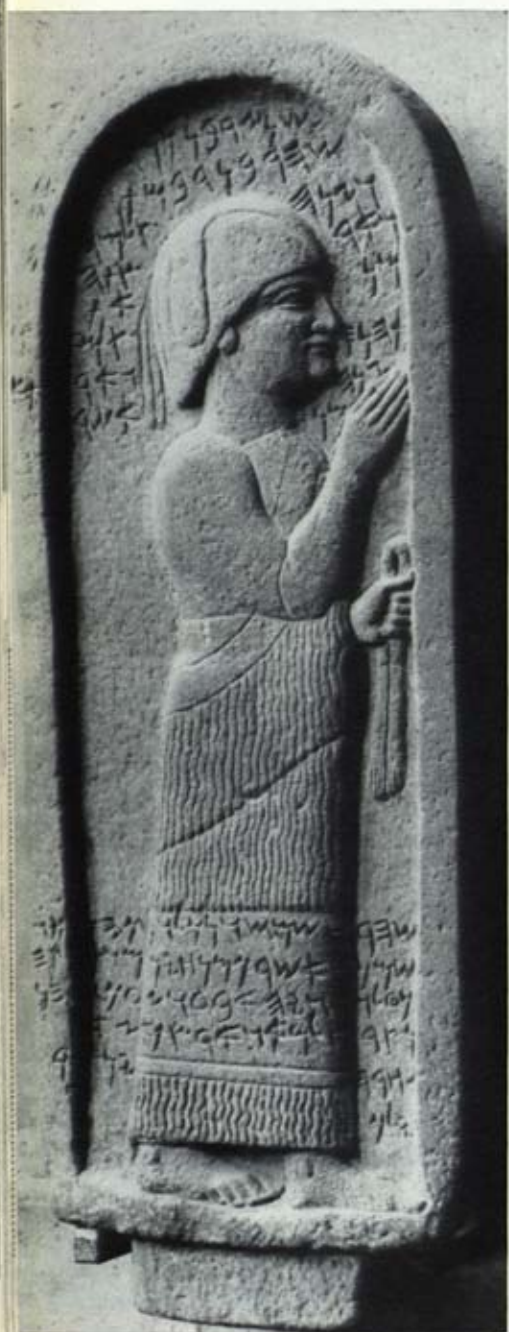
51 Royal statue from Amman



52 Reconstruction of the fortress at Tell el-Duweir (*above*) and letter in Old Hebraic script found there



53 *Above: Jehu of Israel pays homage to Salmaneser III of Assyria; below: conquest of the city of Ashtart by Tiglath-Pileser III. Assyrian reliefs*



54 Two stelae from Nerab, Syria



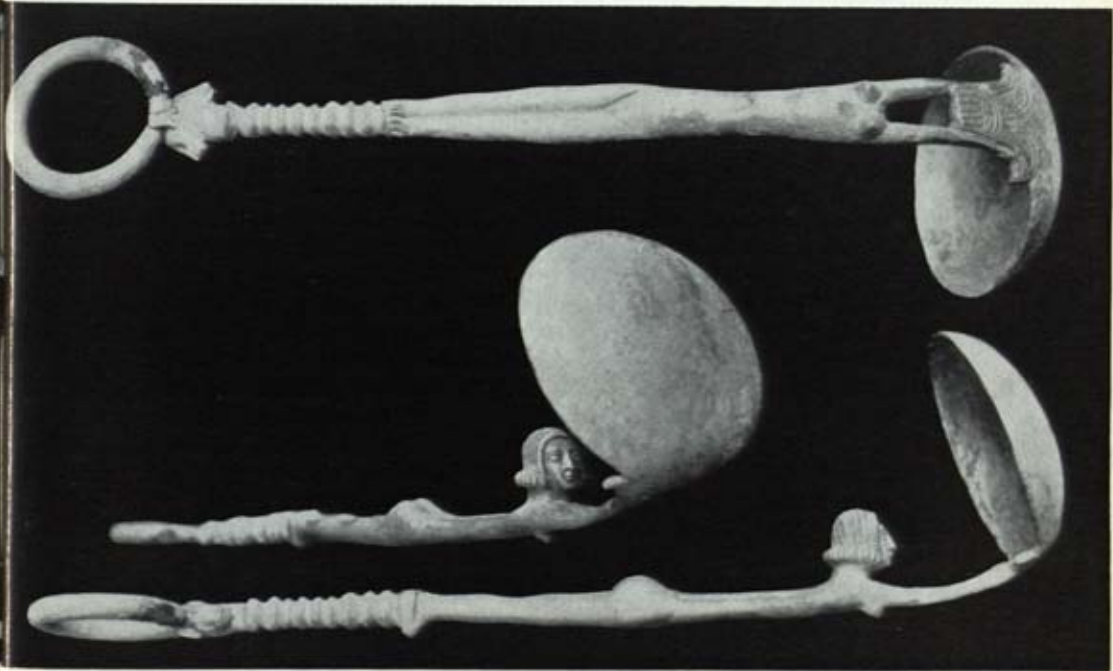
55 Stele from Jekke

56 *Left: clay model of a woman bathing, from Ez-Zib; below: skull found at Tell el-Duweir with signs of an operation*



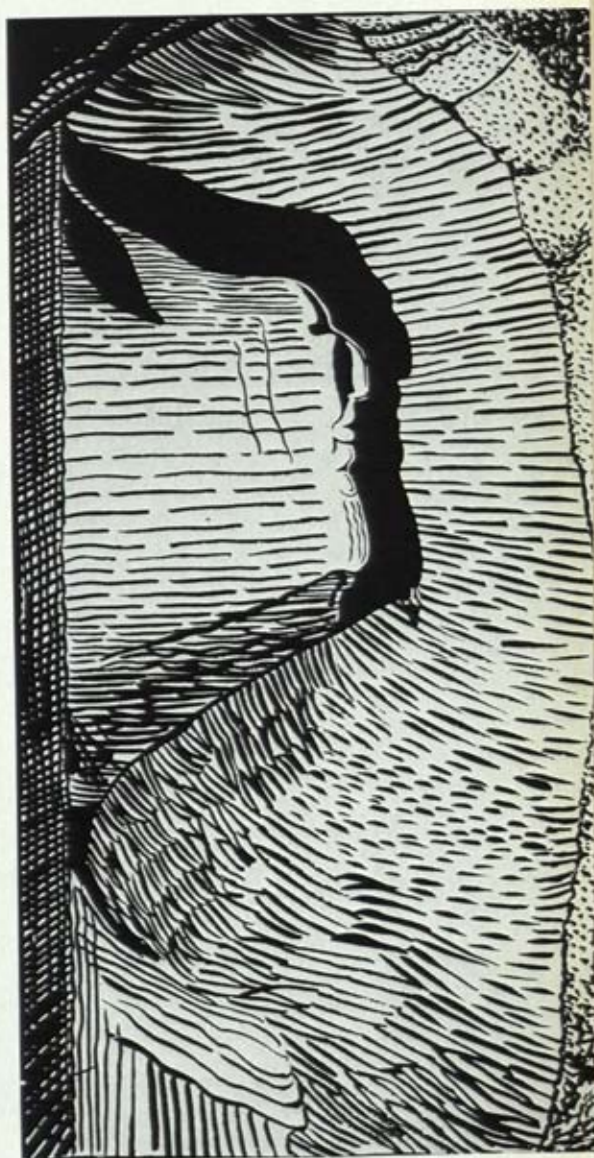


57 Lion from a portal at Sheikh Saad (*above*), and a silver scoop from Tell el-Far'ah





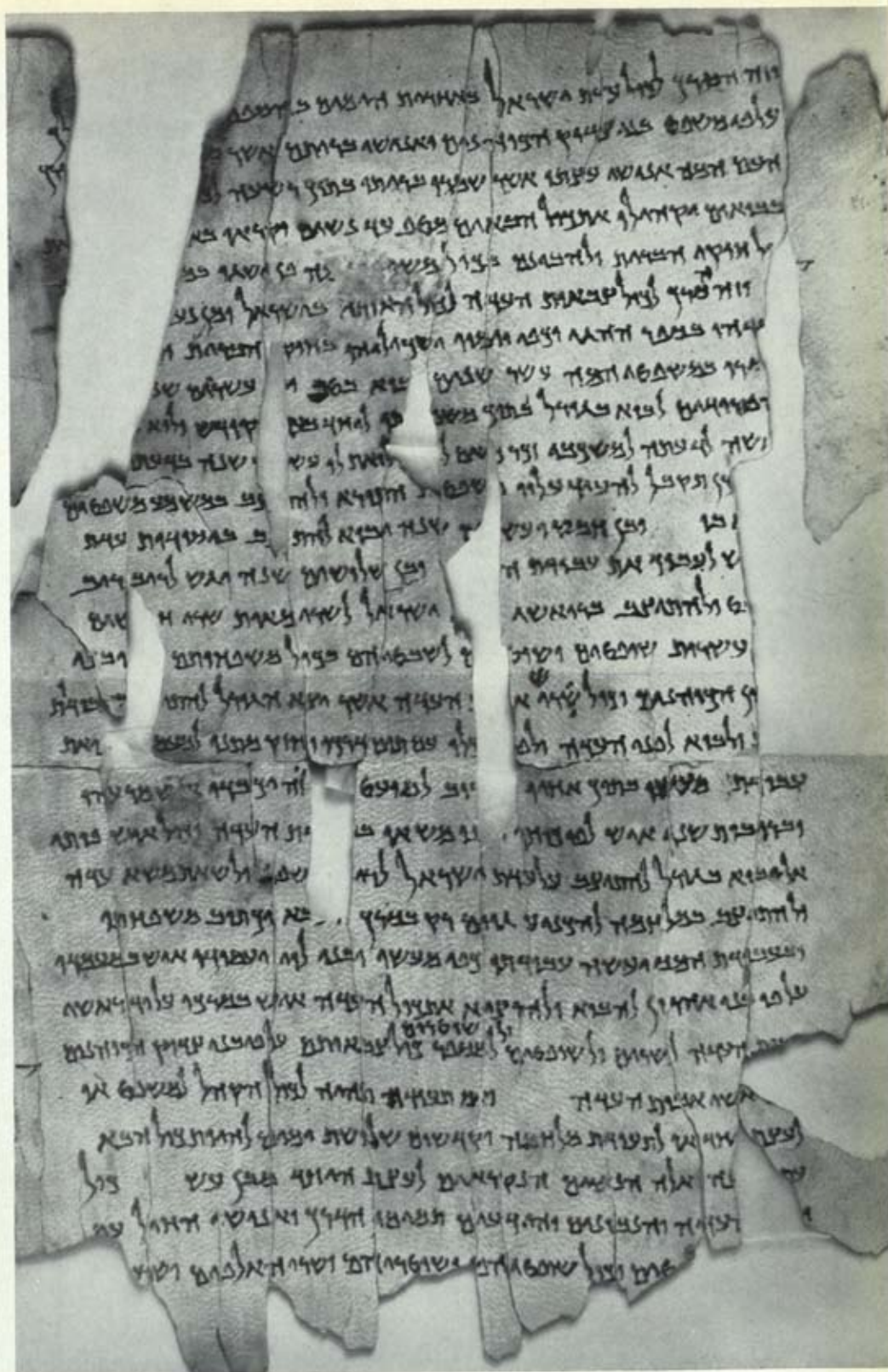
58 Ivory plaques, from Samaria (*above*) and Arslan-Tash

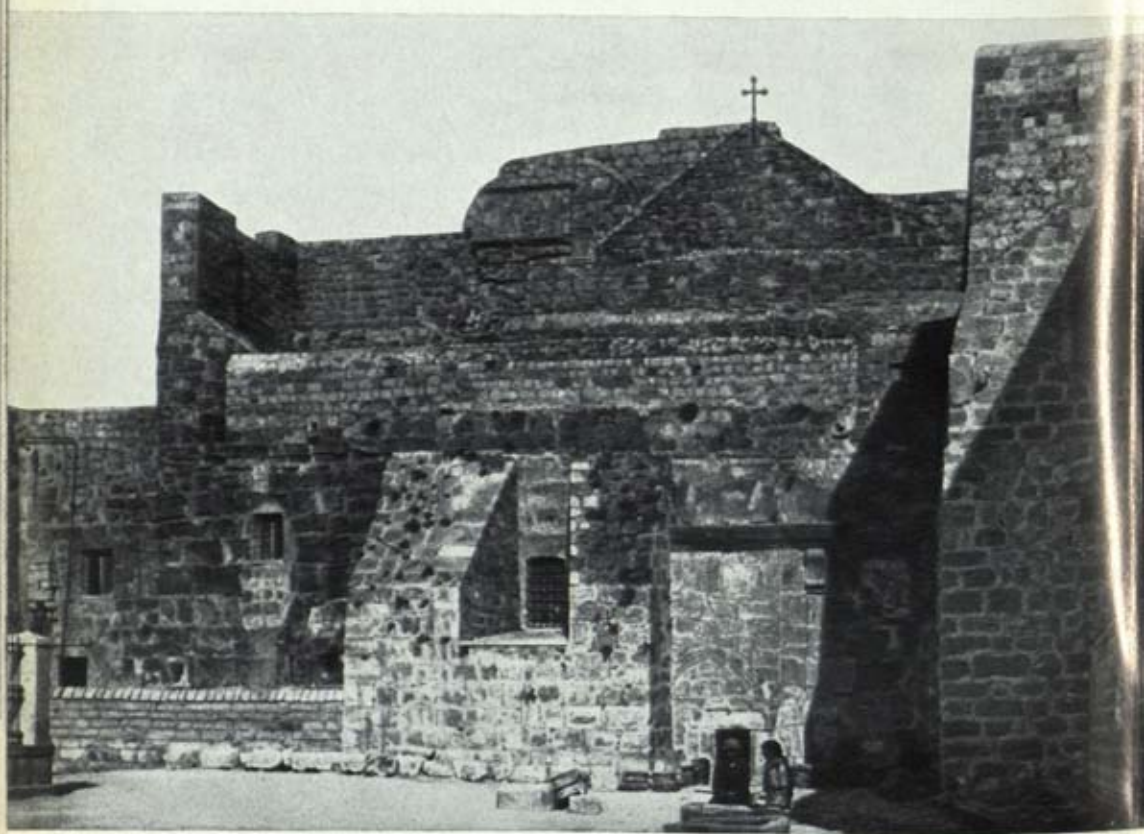


59 *Left: portrait vase from Beth-Shemesh, near Jerusalem; right: rock-carving of a head, at Tell el-Duweir*

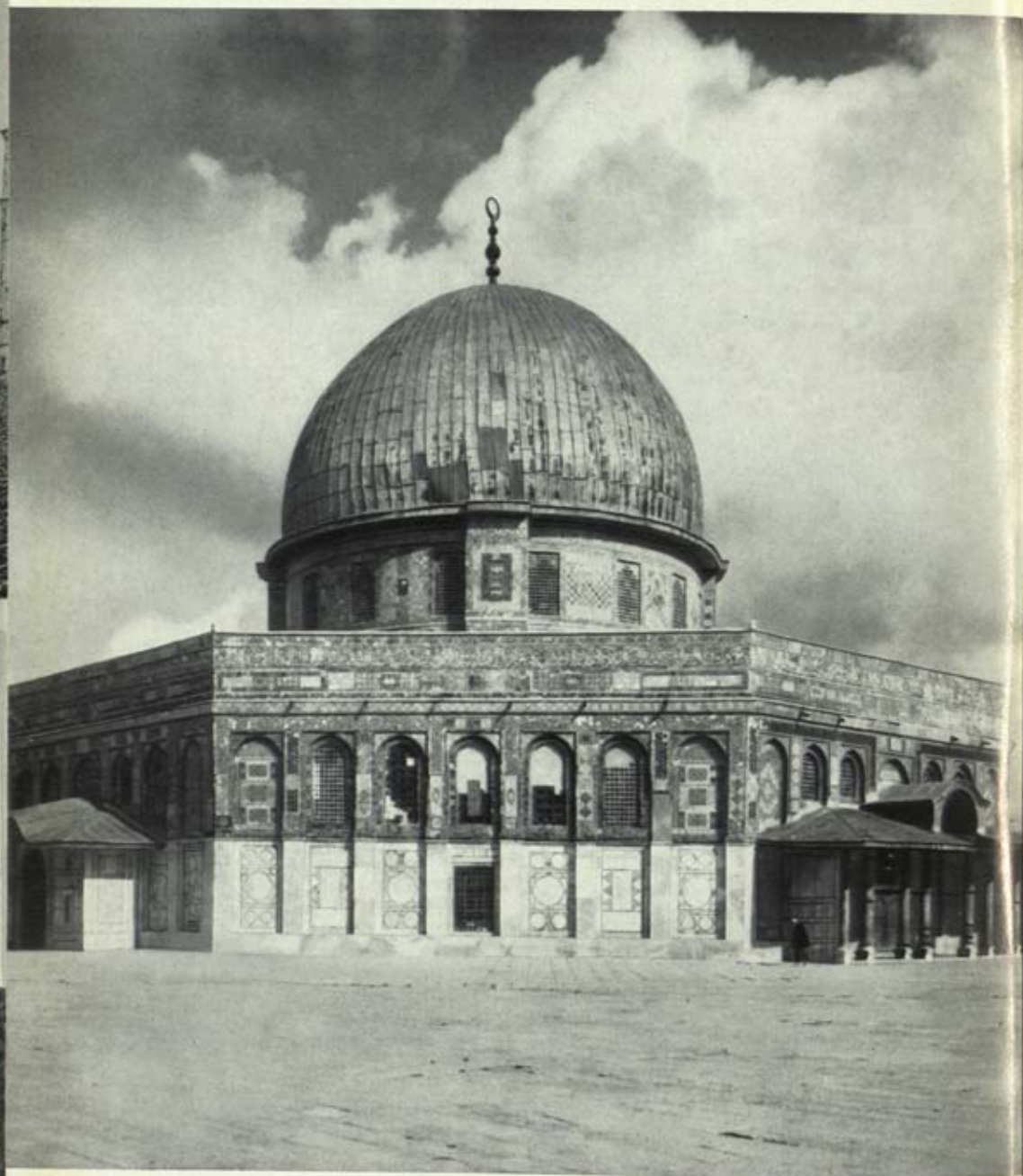


60 *Above: two jars, which contained some of the Dead Sea scrolls; below: the caves at Qumran where the scrolls were found*









64 The Mosque of Omar (Cathedral of the Rock) in Jerusalem

After the Maccabean Wars Jerusalem was governed by the Hasmonean Dynasty, which for the time being remained in power when in 63 BC Palestine-Syria came under Roman rule. The internal conflicts in Rome had an effect in this area of the empire as well. In the final instance this was the reason why Pompey decided to remove the Hasmoneans and instal as king of Jewish Palestine Herod the Great (37-4 BC). Herod was an Oriental despot who did not shrink from bloody deeds and imposed burdensome taxes upon the people, which gave him the revenue with which to finance the construction of ostentatious buildings, among them the Temple of Jerusalem, and to pay for the foreign mercenaries upon whom he relied to make his rule secure. Upon his death he asked the Emperor Augustus for permission, which was granted, to divide the kingdom between his three sons. When they died Palestine came under a Roman governor.

The Jewish population of Palestine found Roman rule even more oppressive than that of the Seleucids, and there were continual clashes with the Roman governors, which finally resulted in the Jewish War of 66-70 AD. In the course of this struggle Jerusalem was taken by the Roman general Titus, and the Temple, rebuilt with such high hopes, was once again destroyed. This broke the power of the Jewish nation – a state of affairs which could not be remedied by the rebellion of Bar Kokhba in 132-135 AD. After this final defeat, the Jews began to scatter across the entire world.

Much light is thrown upon the religious differences among the Jews during the post-exilic period – such as those between the Pharisees and Sadducees – by discoveries that have been made since 1947 in caves on the north-western shore of the Dead Sea. A group of shepherds searching for a goat that had gone astray found some manuscripts which have ever since exercised a growing fascination upon scholars the world over. When a stone was thrown into a crevice, in an effort to locate the missing goat, it produced a curious sound, and the shepherds decided to examine the caves more attentively. They found large dry jars which yielded, not the treasures of gold hoped for, but some old leather scrolls. These came into the possession of various investigators; a systematic search was then undertaken of other caves, and this led to the discovery of other documents.

The leather scrolls are written in the Hebrew script and language and were soon identified as documents relating to a Jewish sect which lived in these caves by the Dead Sea. The hypothesis that they belonged to

the first century BC was suggested by the jars in which the scrolls were found, and was confirmed by study of their contents and the mode of writing. They contained, among much else, parts of the Old Testament, including the complete text of the Book of Isaiah, part of the five books of Moses, and of the Psalms. This alone was of great significance, for hitherto the earliest Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament dated from the ninth century *after* Christ. We now have texts which are a thousand years older than these. And these documents show that the Old Testament texts copied in the ninth century AD agreed by and large with those in use during the first century BC (plates 60, 61).

As well as these copies of the books of the Old Testament, the Dead Sea caves yielded other manuscripts which undoubtedly relate to a Jewish sect which lived there (having presumably fled to these caves for security). Among these works are a book of rules, hymns, and a work called *The Struggle of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*. The hermits who dwelt here were led by a 'Teacher of Righteousness' and took their meals in common. They may possibly have belonged to the Jewish sect of Essenes.

Although these documents about a Jewish sect of the first century BC are undoubtedly a very valuable contribution to our knowledge of New Testament times, in assessing the new discoveries some scholars have overshot the mark. As often happens with finds that have some affinity with the books of the Old or New Testament, so also in this case some researchers saw in this Jewish sect by the Dead Sea a predecessor of the earliest Christian community. The custom of taking meals in common was said to be the source of the Christian teaching about the Last Supper, and so on. These investigators would have done better to avoid jumping to conclusions and to have borne in mind that both Christianity and the newly discovered Jewish community by the Dead Sea based their teachings upon the Old Testament, and that it is therefore not surprising that one should be able to detect some similarities in externals. Essentially, we come up here against the same problem that has confronted students of the Old Testament ever since discoveries began in the Near East. The external forms of rites, the mode of verbal expression, and the religious symbols may resemble one another, but yet there can still be a complete difference in the inner substance of various faiths. This no doubt applies equally to the relationship between Christianity and the Jewish sect that lived by the shores of the Dead Sea.

Christ, of course, grew up amidst the customs and usages of the

EPILOGUE: PENETRATION BY GREECE AND ROME

Jewish people, knew their religious ideas, and accepted them. Yet we can see from His teaching – quite apart from His claim to be the Son of God, which seemed monstrous to the Jews – what a deep gulf must soon have separated Him from his Jewish fellow-citizens. The recurring 'Yet I say unto you . . .' are the words which, even externally, distinguish His doctrine from the religion of his fellows. It was a tragedy that the Jewish people could not find their way to accept Christianity.

The period of Greek and Roman rule in Palestine-Syria saw the creation of a number of magnificent works of art, and the construction of a number of buildings, which continue to astonish travellers to the region even today.

North-east of Damascus lay the ancient city of Tadmor, now Palmyra. This important focal point of trade with Mesopotamia is first mentioned in the inscriptions of Mari (c. 1700 BC), when the king records his capture of the city. The Biblical account (II Chronicles 8: 4) has it that the place was fortified by Solomon, but whether this is historically true we do not as yet know. The Romans were attracted by Tadmor's riches, but did not succeed in finally mastering the city until the third century AD. It was during the period of Roman rule that were built the great temples which today bear witness to the city's former splendour.

Between the mountain ranges of the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon lies the great ruined city of Baalbek. We have no information about this place from ancient Near Eastern sources. That it was a sanctuary dedicated to the Canaanite god Baal is obvious; what *bek*, the second part of the name, means we do not know. In Roman times the city was enlarged by Roman settlers, whose culture was wholly under the influence of the Hellenism that had permeated the country over the previous few centuries.

About twenty-five miles north of Baalbek is the sepulchral monument of Hermel, an imposing structure 85 ft. high dating from the early Roman period. In Transjordan we find the extensive ruined site of Gerasa (the modern Jerash) and Petra, famous for its rock-cut tombs.

In Samaria, the old capital of the northern Israelite kingdom, which was rebuilt by Herod the Great and called Sebaste (the modern Sebastye or Sabastiya), some fine Roman monuments have been preserved, notably the splendid colonnades and the Temple of Augustus with its broad terrace.

In or about the fourth century AD the first Christian churches were

built. One of the earliest basilicas is the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. In Syria, which at that time was enjoying a period of great prosperity, there appeared a number of churches and monasteries, built of hewn stone, whose façades and other details herald elements of Romanesque style. We may mention in particular the monastery of St Simeon Stylites near Aleppo, the basilica of St Simeon Stylites the Younger near Antioch, the basilica of Qalblozé (Turmanin), and the basilica of St Sergius at Risafe in the Syrian desert. This flourishing early Christian architectural tradition was cut short by the Persian and Mohammedan conquests of the seventh century. (See plates 62 and 63.)

When, in the eighth century, Byzantium, heir to the Roman Empire, had to cede Palestine-Syria to the advancing Arabs, the buildings of the area obtained a new aspect, since Islamic art followed totally different principles. But no country is in a position to deny its history, the legacy of its past. The modern visitor to Palestine, as he wanders through the country (not, however, taking the same route that was followed by the great armies of antiquity) is constantly coming upon silent witnesses to bygone ages: here the debris of a Greek temple, there a Roman milestone; here an ancient wall, built under the Israelite monarchy, there sherds of an ancient jar from which Canaanites may have drunk in the second millennium BC; here an Egyptian scarab, brought in by a soldier of the Egyptian pharaoh, there a hoe, a round stone with a hole through it, with which a peasant of the fourth millennium BC tilled the soil. Everywhere are the relics of civilizations that have long since ceased to exist.

In Palestine-Syria one must constantly experience the feelings expressed by Goethe in his poem 'The Traveller' where the poet describes the path taken by a pilgrim through Italy. In a lonely district the traveller comes upon a hut built of material taken from an ancient building. We have journeyed through Palestine-Syria for more than five thousand years of its history, and may fittingly bring our travels to an end with Goethe's words:

An architrave half buried in the moss!
 Man's shaping spirit has been busy here;
 It has impress'd its seal upon the stone.
 Lo! An inscription 'neath my very feet!
 Not to be read! Ye have departed, too,
 ye deeply-graven characters, that should
 have testified your master's piety
 to thousand generations yet to come.

NOTES ON THE PLATES

Plates

- 1 View of the Plain of Jezreel from Mt Tabor. In the foreground, the summit of Nebi Dahi, an Arab sanctuary. In the background, to the right, the ancient city of Megiddo. Photo. Dr Focko Lüpken (from *Palestine*, published by Eckart Verlag).
- 2 Jebel Usdum, at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. One of the peaks is called 'Lot's Wife' (cf. *Genesis* 19: 26). The name Usdum recalls the Biblical Sodom. Photo. Paul Popper, London.
- 3 Landscape in the Jordan valley. The meandering river is lined by on both sides, by mountains of soft calcereous rock, eroded to form bizarre shapes by thousands of years of rainfall. Photo. Author.
- 4 *Above*: dolmens in the country east of the Jordan, near the town of Irbid. Photo. Author.
Below: Prehistoric petroglyph from Kilwa, south-eastern Palestine. Ibex with a human figure. (Photo and drawing.) From H. Rhotert, *Transjordanien*, 1938, p. 168, Pl. 13(2).
- 5 Modelled skull from Jericho. From *Antiquity*, vol. 30, no. 120.
- 6 Male head from a triad (man, woman, child) found in Stone Age Jericho. The figures are modelled in clay. The eyes are suggested by shells; the hair of the head and the beard are indicated by coloured strokes. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. From *Syria*, 16, Pl. LXIII. Height 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
- 7 *Above*: house-urn from Jericho, found in the Stone Age stratum dating from the 5th millennium B.C. It doubtless represents the type of house in use at that time. One can identify a lower and an upper storey, the latter supported by a column. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. From *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, vol. 23, Pl. 40. Height 39 in., width 31 in.
Below: round tower of the Stone Age fortifications of Jericho. On top one can see the entrance to a flight of steps leading to the bottom of the tower. From *Illustrated London News*, 13 October 1956. Photo. K. Kenyon.

Plates

- 8 *Above*: fragmentary painting in red and black, from the 4th millennium BC. Found at Teleilat el-Ghassul, east of the Jordan. Two seated figures (their feet resting on footstools) and five standing figures can clearly be identified; on the extreme left are probably the remnants of a star. This may have been a representation of a ritual scene. From Mallon-Koeppel, *Teleilat el-Ghassul*, I, Pl. 66.
Below: bird painted in black on a wall at Teleilat el-Ghassul (east of the Jordan). 4th millennium BC. After *ibid.*, Pl. 57.
- 9 Head of a demon, painted in white, black and red on the wall of a house at Teleilat el-Ghassul. Noteworthy are the coiffure and (highly stylized) pointed beard. Middle of 4th millennium BC. From *ibid.*, Pl. 67.
- 10 *Above*: house-urn, painted in red and brown. From Hederah (Khudeirah), in the coastal area north of Jaffa. The shape of the house is not Palestinian. Middle of 4th millennium BC. From *IPOS*, 17, p. 15.
Below: polychrome wall-painting from Teleilat el-Ghassul, east of Jordan. 4th millennium BC. The star has a diameter of 72 in. The paintings to its left presumably depict demonic figures. Noteworthy is the headgear worn by one of these figures. From Mallon-Koeppel, *Teleilat el-Ghassul*, I, frontispiece.
- 11 *Above*: plan of the palace at Ai. A: Great Hall containing four column-bases; B: side gallery; C: large court in front of the palace. From *Syria*, 16, p. 349, Fig. 8.
Below: side gallery in the palace at Ai, which encloses the Great Hall on three sides. Width 8ft. 2in. The column-bases are arranged at intervals of 8ft. 2in. 3rd millennium BC. From *Syria*, 16, Pl. LI.
- 12 *Above*: specimen of so-called 'Gublitic script', used in some ten documents discovered in the excavations carried out from 1929 onwards by French archaeologists at Byblos. This script comprises 72 signs, of which each presumably renders one syllable. It was probably invented during the first half of the 2nd millennium, but was not widely disseminated. From Dunand, *Byblia Grammata*, IX.
Centre: inscription of Shipit-Baal, written in Old Semitic script, found at Byblos. See table of scripts on p. 24. Probably 10th century BC. From *ibid.*, XVI.
Below: transcription of Pl. 12, centre. Old Semitic script was written from right to left, as Hebrew was to be later. The end of each word was indicated by a dot or a stroke. From *ibid.*, Fig. 49.
- 13 *Left*: letter of King Abdu-Heba ('servant of the goddess Heba') of Jerusalem, addressed to an Egyptian king. It is written in Babylonian cuneiform, then the script of diplomacy, and in the Akkadian language

Plates

spoken in Babylonia. The script was written from left to right. Photo. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Right, above: Ugaritic script, written on clay. It was developed at Ugarit during the 15th c. and was modelled upon Babylonian cuneiform. But in contrast to the latter, Ugaritic script was purely alphabetic, consisting of thirty characters; in this respect it was influenced by the Old Semitic alphabet. From *Syria*, 10, Pl. LXXVIII.

Right, below: so-called 'Gezer calendar inscription', in which the twelve months of the year are enumerated by reference to the most important agricultural activities. Old Semitic script of the 10th-9th c. written from right to left. From *Excavations of Gezer*, III, Pl. CXXVII.

- 14 Relief from Karnak. Princes of the Lebanon felling cedars for the Egyptian king Seti I (1313-1292 BC). The hairdress of the princes is characteristic of that worn by inhabitants of Palestine-Syria at that time, as represented by Egyptian artists. Photo. Hessische Treuhandverwaltung, Wiesbaden.
- 15 *Above*: clay model of a barque, from Byblos. Probably late 3rd millennium. From Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, I, 140.
Below: stone sarcophagus of King Ahiiram of Byblos. The sarcophagus, supported by lions, is surrounded by sculptures relating to the death of the king. On the left, probably a priest officiating before an altar. The women striding towards the altar will be the 'wailing women' that were customary at that time. The stroke used in the Old Semitic script engraved on the sarcophagus suggests a date in the 11th or 10th c. BC. National Museum, Beirut. From Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, Pl. 130. Length 90 in.
- 16 *Above*: two basalt lions from the excavated area at Tell Atchana (the ancient Alalakh), northern Syria. The lions may have been tutelary deities. Photo. L. Woolley. Height 48½ in.
Below: steps and hall of columns in the palace of Alalakh. Above the steps two column-bases are still visible. Photo. L. Woolley.
- 17 *Above*: stone bust of Yarim-Lim of Alalakh. 18th c. BC. Photo. L. Woolley.
Below: modelled ram's head from Alalakh. A piece unique in ancient Near Eastern art. Photo. L. Woolley.
- 18 Statue of King Idrimi of Alalakh, hewn out of magnesite and encrusted with black stone. On the robe of the king the history of his rise to power is recorded in Babylonian cuneiform script. Photo. British Museum. Height 39 in.
- 19 Egyptian figure modelled in clay, representing an inhabitant of

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- Palestine-Syria. In front is inscribed, in Egyptian hieroglyphs, a so-called 'execration text', a formula anathematizing one of the lands of Palestine-Syria. Photo. A. Mekithatian. Musées Royaux, Brussels.
- 20 So-called lion plaque hewn in stone, from Beth-Shan. It shows lions and dogs fighting. Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. Height 37 in.
- 21 *Above*: reconstruction of the temple at Qatna (modern Mishrife), northern Syria. From *Syria*, 11, Pl. XXIX.
Below: reconstruction of the temple of the Egyptian king Ramses III at Beth-Shan (modern Beisan, in the Jordan valley). From Rowe, *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan*, Fig. 5.
- 22 Incense-burning altar from Taanach in the plain of Jezreel. It is decorated with a large number of sphinges. The perforations on the side walls were to permit the flow of air. It remains an open question whether this stove was of a profane or religious character. Photo. Archaeological Museum, Istanbul. Height 36 in., width at base 18 in.
- 23 Incense-burning altar from Byblos. The various animals carved on this cult object, among them serpents, probably had religious associations. The custom of affixing such sculptures to vessels is also found in Cyprus (cf. Bossert, *Alt-Syrien*, Pl. 113). From Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, I, 139. Height 9½ in.
- 24 *Above*: sacrificial altar from Ugarit (Ras Shamra), on the Syrian coast. The horizontal lower part was used for the deposition of gifts. At the top is probably a solar emblem. From *Syria*, 13, Pl. XIV. Height 12¾ in.
Below: bronze cult vessel from Ugarit. It stands on three legs and is topped by an oval basin. This piece may have symbolized the so-called 'sea', or 'holy sea', mentioned in literary sources. A 'sea' of this kind stood in the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (cf. I Kings, 7: 23 ff.). Similar ritual implements were also to be found in Cyprus (cf. Bossert, *Alt-Syrien*, Pl. 283). Louvre, Paris. From *Syria*, 10, Pl. LX.
- 25 *Above*: Mycenaean domed tomb at Ugarit. In c. 1400 BC this type of burial also appeared in Syria. From Schaeffer, *Ugaritica*, I, Pl. XVII.
Below: entrance to a tomb at Ugarit. From *Syria*, 17, Pl. XVI.
- 26 Statuette of a god in bronze. This may represent the god Baal, wearing a helmet and horns, with his right hand raised in a threatening gesture. The headgear may derive from Egyptian models. From *Syria*, 17, Pl. XXI. Height 8 in.
- 27 Deity cast in bronze, from Ugarit. This may represent the god Baal. The headgear is of gold plate, the bracelet is of gold, and the legs are

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- covered with silver. Louvre, Paris. Photo. Archives Photographiques, Paris. Height $7\frac{1}{4}$ in.
- 28 Seated deity from Ugarit. Louvre, Paris. From *Syria*, 17, Pl. XV.
- 29 Two frit figures on a clay chariot. Found at Ugarit. 13 c. BC. It must remain an open question whether this is an object of profane character (a toy?) or a cult figure (double deity?). Similar clay sculptures have also been found in Cyprus (cf. Bossert, *Alt-Syrien*, Pl. 137). From *Syria*, 17, Pl. XVIII. Height $7\frac{3}{4}$ in.
- 30 Stele hewn from stone, found at Ugarit. The scene depicted may be the conclusion of a treaty: two persons, wearing different headgear, are shaking hands, their elbows resting upon two square objects which may be treaty documents. National Museum, Aleppo. From *Syria*, 17, Pl. XIV.
- 31 Stele hewn from stone, found at Ugarit. This seated figure may be of a deity. He is shown wearing a horned tiara, his left hand raised, and holding a bowl in his right hand. Opposite him is a figure holding a serpent staff in his right hand. Both figures have a 'divine hood'. National Museum, Aleppo. From *Syria*, 18, Pl. XVII. Height $18\frac{3}{4}$ in.
- 32 *Above*: small ivory head from Megiddo (possibly part of a spoon). 13th c. BC. Photo. Oriental Institute, Chicago.
Below: weight in the form of a head, found at Ugarit. The facial features can hardly be termed Semitic or oriental. From *Syria*, 18, Pl. XXIV. Height $1\frac{1}{2}$ in., weight 63 oz.
- 33 *Above*: axe found at Ugarit. The axe is of bronze, the handle of iron, and the place where the two are joined is decorated with a boar in gold plate. C. 14th c. BC. From *Syria*, 19, Pl. XXXIV. Length 7 in.
Below: golden bowl from Ugarit, depicting animals and sphinges. C. 14th c. BC. From *Syria*, 15, Pl. XV. Diameter $6\frac{3}{4}$ in.
- 34 Gold ornaments found in excavations at Tell el-Ajjul, south-western Palestine. *Above*: plaques representing the mother goddess. *Below*: earring (in granulation technique) and pendant. Photo. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
- 35 Ivory carving from Megiddo. Female figure wearing a long robe edged with coloured ribbons, and low-hanging headgear. From Loud, *Megiddo Ivories*, Pl. 38. Height c. 8 in.
- 36 *Above*: ivory carving representing the Egyptian god Bez. From Megiddo. This deity, worn as an amulet, was also widely disseminated in other parts of Palestine. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. From Mertzenfeld, *Inventaire*, Pl. XXIV. Height 4 in.
Below: bone comb. 2nd millennium BC. Found at Byblos. On the right: a

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- satyr holding in his right hand a flute and a staff, with a female creature looking up at him. On the left: figure of a man (owner of the comb?). From Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, I, 122. Height $3\frac{1}{4}$ in., width $2\frac{1}{2}$ in.
- 37 *Above*: ivory plaque from Megiddo. The triumphant king is shown seated upon his throne. The queen confronts him; behind her is a maiden playing the lyre, followed by warriors and prisoners. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. After Mertzenfeld, *Inventaire*, Pl. XXXV. *Below*: ivory jar, found at Megiddo. Lions and sphinges serve as decoration. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. After Loud, *Megiddo Ivories*, Pl. I. Height 3 in.
- 38 Small scent bottle, carved in ivory, found at Tell ed-Duweir in southern Palestine. 14th or 13th c. BC. Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. Height 10 in.
- 39 *Above*: portrait vase fashioned in clay, from Byblos. Note the headgear, which is also to be found on figures of deities; it is held in place by a ribbon tied around the chin. From Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, I, 49. *Below*: portrait vase from Jericho. The hair is indicated by small perforations in the clay. Characteristic features include the large eyes, thin straight nose, and pointed beard. This may be the representation of a Hyksos – a member of the dominant people at that time (1800–1700 BC.). From *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, 19, Pl. 43. Height $8\frac{1}{2}$ in.
- 40 *Above*: vessel in the shape of an animal, from Byblos. The aperture on top is clearly visible. From the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 2nd millennium. From Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, I, 75. *Below*: clay jug in the shape of an animal, from Jericho. 1800–1700 BC. From *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, 21, Pl. 44. Height 8 in.
- 41 *Above*: clay rhyton in the shape of a fish, found at Minet el-Beida. From *Syria*, 13, Pl. II. Height $4\frac{3}{4}$ in. *Below*: clay rhyton in the shape of a hedgehog (or turtle?), found at Ugarit. From Schaeffer, *Ugaritica*, II, Pl. XXXVII.
- 42 *Above*: Mycenaean 'stirrup vase' from Ugarit. The term 'stirrup vase' is derived from the stirrup running across the upright spout, which is closed; the lateral spout is open. This piece was probably imported from the Aegean islands. From *Syria*, 18, Pl. XXII. *Below*: clay 'stirrup vase' from Jett in Palestine. Unique native copy of a Mycenaean stirrup vase. 14th c. BC. Photo. Author. Height $4\frac{1}{4}$ in.
- 43 Seated goddess, from Beirut. Note the curious shoes. Louvre, Paris. Photo. Archives Photographiques, Paris. Height $6\frac{1}{2}$ in.
- 44 Tunnel for the supply of water at Megiddo. This photograph shows the horizontal tunnel, which is about 195 ft. long and led to the spring.

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The tunnel was dug simultaneously from both ends; the spot where the two parties of workmen met is indicated by the measuring-rod on the left-hand wall of the tunnel (after the bend). Photo. Oriental Institute, Chicago.

- 45 Monuments by the Nahr el-Kelb (= 'Dog river'), on the coast north of Beirut. Here Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian kings had themselves immortalized when they made their inroads into Palestine-Syria during the 2nd and 1st millennia BC.

Left: the figure of Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC). *Right*: an inscription of the Egyptian king Ramses II (1292-1225 BC). From Dussaud, Deschamps and Seyrig, *La Syrie antique et médiévale illustrée*, Pl. 28.

- 46 *Above*: cross-section of the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. In the centre is the main sanctuary; to the right and left are auxiliary chambers on three floors. From Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*, Pl. 221.

Below: diagram of the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. Entrance was gained from the east by way of a flight of steps to the ante-room (A); on the right and left stood a brazen column (J). Then follows the temple area proper, which consists of the sacred chamber (B) and holy of holies (C). In the latter stood the Ark of the Covenant. The temple is surrounded by thirty chambers on each of three floors (D); the entrance to this annexe building was from the south (E). From *ibid.*, Pl. 220.

- 47 *Above*: Jebel Musa ('Moses' Mountain') on the Sinai peninsula where, as tradition has it, Moses received the Commandments. From Gröber, *Palästina*, Pl. 294.

Below: Tell el-Ful, north of Jerusalem, the Biblical Gibeon of Saul. The remains are thought to be of the fortress erected by Saul (cf. I Samuel 9). Photo. V. Bockstiegel, *Palästina* (Eckart Verlag).

- 48 Stone stele bearing inscription of King Mesha of Moab, from the 9th c. BC, found at Dibon (Dhiban), east of the Jordan. The stele was badly damaged after discovery, but could be restored with the aid of impressions. Louvre, Paris. Photo. Archives Photographiques, Paris. Height 48 in.

- 49 Clay model of a house altar found at Tell el-Farah (Samaria). Israelite royal period, 10th-9th c. BC. The house altar probably contained the statuette of a god. Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem.

- 50 Royal statue from Amman (to the east of the Jordan). Note the clothing, and especially the broad bands wound across the robe. Israelite royal period. Photo. Department of Antiquities, Amman. Height 31½ in.

- 51 Royal statue from Amman (to the east of the Jordan). Israelite royal period (cf. Plate 50). Photo. Department of Antiquities, Amman. Height 18 in.

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- 52 *Above*: reconstruction of the sanctuary at Tell ed-Duweir (Lachish?). Photo. Institute of Archaeology, University of London.
Below: letter in Old Hebraic script and language, found in excavations at Tell ed-Duweir. 7th c. BC. This is the text quoted on page 106. From Tufnell, *Lachish*, I, p. 76.
- 53 *Above*: Jehu, king of the Israelite northern kingdom, yields to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (841 BC). Relief from the Black Obelisk. Photo. British Museum.
Below: conquest of the city of Ashtartu by the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC). This place is probably the Biblical Ashtaroth (cf. Genesis 14: 5), the modern Ashtara, east of the Jordan. Like many other Assyrian and Egyptian representations, this shows an ancient Palestinian fortress. Photo. British Museum.
- 54 *Right*: stele from Nerab in northern Syria, showing the priest Agbar seated at his meal. The inscription, written in Old Semitic and Aramaic, implores a number of gods for protection. C. 7th c. BC. Louvre, Paris. Photo. Archives Photographiques, Paris.
Left: stele from Nerab. The standing figure is the priest Sin-zer-bani. The inscription, written in Old Semitic and Aramaic, threatens with divine punishment anyone attempting to violate the stele. C. 7th c. BC. Louvre, Paris. Photo. Archives Photographiques, Paris.
- 55 Stele from Jekke. Weather god with lightning-rod standing upon a bull. In his right hand he holds a symbol of good fortune. The Hittite hieroglyphs that completely cover the stele tell us that the donor was a 'servant', i.e. a follower, of Sardur II of Urartu. C. 750 BC. Photo. Direction des Antiquités de la Syrie du Nord, Aleppo.
- 56 *Above*: clay model of a woman bathing. Found at Ez-Zib, north of Acre. From the Israelite royal period; of interest to the cultural historian. Size 4 x 3½ in. Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. *Below*: skull found at Tell ed-Duweir, with clear traces of a successful skull operation. 9th c. BC. Photo. Institute of Archaeology, University of London.
- 57 *Above*: lion from a portal at Sheikh Saad, east of the Jordan. Probably late 2nd or early 1st millennium BC. Length 97½ in., height 51 in. Damascus Museum. From Dussaud, Deschamps and Seyrig, *La Syrie antique et médiévale illustrée*, Pl. 19.
Below: silver scoop from Tell el-Farah, southern Palestine. Length c. 4¾ in. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. From *Beth Pelet*, I, Pl. XLV.
- 58 *Above*: ivory sphinx from Samaria. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem. From Crowfoot, *Early Ivories from Samaria*, Pl. V.

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Below: ivory plaque from Arslan-Tash, north-eastern Syria. Part of a tribute paid to the Assyrian king Adadnirari III (809-782 BC) by King Benhadad III of Damascus, son of Hazael. Louvre, Paris. From Thureau-Dangin, *Arslan Tash*, Pl. XLI.

- 59 *Left*: portrait vase from Beth-Shemesh, south-west of Jerusalem. Israelite royal period. It is undoubtedly a crude portrait of a contemporary. From *Ann. PEF*, 1912-13, Pl. 48.

Right: head hewn from the rock, found at Tell ed-Duweir. Drawing of a head of an Israelite (*left*), discovered in the tunnel; it was carved at the time of its construction. (*Right*); silhouette of the head when drawn in a bright light. From *PEF*, *Qu.* 1938, Pl. 19.

- 60 *Above*: two jars from the Hellenistic era. They contained some of the famous Dead Sea scrolls from the caves of Qumran. Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem.

Below: cave 4 at Qumran, which yielded the most abundant finds of manuscripts. Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem.

- 61 Document from Qumran: the first column of the 'Book of Rules'. The script consists of square letters, adopted by the Jews from Aramaeans in the post-Exilic period. Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem.

- 62 *Above*: Basilica of Qalblozé, between Aleppo and the Orontes valley. One of the finest examples of an early Christian three-aisled basilica in Syria, from the 6th c. AD. From Dussaud, Deschamps and Seyrig, *La Syrie antique et médiévale illustrée*, Pl. 73.

Below: Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, built by Constantine the Great in 326 and rebuilt by Justinian in 550. From Gröber, *Palästina*, Pl. 102.

- 63 The church of St Simeon at Qalat Siman, northern Syria. Built in the 5th c. AD on the site of the column upon which St Simeon (d. 459) lived for 27 years. Four basilicas formed an octagon around a large building in the centre; of these one served as a church and the other three as hostels for the numerous pilgrims. This plate shows the basilica that faces south. Photo. Paul Popper, London.

- 64 The Mosque of Omar, Jerusalem, also known as the Cathedral of the Rock after the huge rock situated below the mosque. The Mosque of Omar stands on the site of the ancient Temple of Solomon. Shortly after Palestine was taken by the Arabs, it was built in the so-called Omayyad style (a blend of various artistic motifs). Photo. Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author and publishers wish to take this opportunity of thanking the following individuals for their kind assistance in the preparation of the plates:

J. Abbott (Chicago), H. Abdelnour (Beirut), R. Barnett (London), A. Bea (Rome), A. Charayleh (Amman), M. Dunand (Beirut), P. Gilbert (Brussels), K. Kenyon (London), J.J. Orchard (Oxford), J. du Plat Taylor (London), P.A. Pohl (Rome), K.G. Putnam (London), J. Saad (Jerusalem), Cl. Schaeffer (St German-en-Laye), F. Seirafi (Aleppo), P.R. de Vaux (Jerusalem), L. Woolley (Sedgehill Manor).

Photographs were kindly supplied by the following museums and institutions: Archaeological Museum, Istanbul; Archives Photographiques, Paris; British Museum, London; Department of Antiquities, Amman; Direction des Antiquités de la Syrie du Nord, Aleppo; Eckart Verlag, Witten; Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française, Jerusalem; Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Hessische Treuhandverwaltung, Wiesbaden; Institute of Archaeology, University of London; Musées Royaux, Brussels; Oriental Institute, Chicago; Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem; Paul Popper, London; Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

The translator wishes to thank the following authors and publishers for permission to use the works cited below in translations from ancient languages:

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Bible quotations from: *The Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Edition. Nelson, London, 1959.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

5th millennium	Foundation of Jericho, Byblos, Ugarit and Hamat
4th millennium	Foundation of Telcilat el-Ghassul, Megiddo, Beth-Shan and Beth-Yerach
3rd millennium	Egyptian and Babylonian rulers send forces into Palestine-Syria; the first Semitic peoples enter the country
1887-1849	Sesostris III of Egypt
1730-1688	Hammurabi of Babylon
1501-1447	Thutmosis III of Egypt
c. 1500	Idrimi II of Alalakh
1468	Battle near Megiddo
1411-1375	Amenophis III
1375-1357	Amenophis IV
c. 1350	Niqmado II of Ugarit
1375-1335	Suppiluliumas of Hatti
1313-1292	Seti I of Egypt
1292-1225	Ramses II of Egypt
1303-1282	Mutallis II of Hatti
1288	Battle near Kadesh on the Orontes
c. 1200	Moses
c. 1050	Saul
c. 1000	David
973-933	Solomon
933	Israelite kingdom partitioned between North and South
887-877	Omri
877-854	Ahab
858-824	Shalmaneser III
842-815	Jehu
783-743	Jeroboam II
745-727	Tiglath-Pileser III
727-699	Hezekiah
722	Destruction of Samaria
640-609	Josiah

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705-681	Sennacherib
612	Decline of Assyrian Empire
605-562	Nebuchadnezzar II
586	Destruction of Jerusalem
538	Edict of Cyrus; Jews return from exile
444	Law of Ezra
330	Alexander the Great conquers Palestine-Syria
175-164	Antiochus IV Epiphanes
166-164	Maccabean Wars

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