

## ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE TANACH-SOME EXAMPLES

### IN EGYPT: HEBREW NAMES; THE HABIRU

The **Brooklyn Papyrus** portrays Israelite names from the Bible as the names of domestic slave: Asher, Yissachar, and Shifra.

The document also includes the term, "**Hapiru**", which many scholars agree has clear affinity to the Biblical term, "Ivrim" (Hebrews).....

**The Leiden papyrus** reports that an official for the construction of Ramases II ordered to "distribute grain rations to the soldiers and to the Apiru who transport stones to the great pylon of Ramases." Prof Abraham Malamat of the Hebrew University infers from this that the Hebrews were forced to build the city of Ramasses. "This evidence is circumstantial at best", notes Malamat, "but it's as much as a historian can argue."

### THE NAME 'ISRAEL' - MERNEPTAH'S STELE



An Egyptian inscription dated to 1210 BCE clearly identifies an Israel in the land of Canaan. The inscription, which records the victories of Pharaoh Merneptah in Canaan, reads in part:

**"Israel is laid waste; his seed is no more".**

### DAVID'S PALACE?

Dr. Eilat Mazar, world authority on Jerusalem's past, has taken King David out of the pages of the Bible and put him back into living history. Mazar's latest excavation in the City of David, in the southern shadow of the Temple Mount, has shaken up the archaeological world. **For lying undisturbed for over 3,000 years is a massive building which Mazar believes is King David's palace.** But Mazar always suspected that the palace was outside the original city, and cites the Bible to prove it. When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed, they went on the attack to apprehend him. This occurred after he conquered the Fortress of Zion, which was the actual nucleus of the city, and built his palace. The Bible says that David heard about it and "descended to the fortress," (2-Samuel 5:17), implying that he went *down* from his palace, which was higher up on the mountain than the citadel/city.

Mazar told Aish.com: "I always asked myself: Down from where? It must have been from his palace on top of the hill, outside the original Jebusite city."

Within the dirt fill between the stones were found **pottery shards dating to the 11th century BCE**, the time when David established his monarchy. Based on biblical text and historic evidence, Mazar assumed that David would have built his palace outside the walls of the fortified but cramped Jebusite city which existed up to 2,000 years before; and in fact, the structure is built on the summit of the mountain, directly on bedrock along the city's northern edge, with no archaeological layers beneath it -- a sign that the structure constituted a new, northward expansion of the city's northern limit

“The construction that we found was a complicated and intricate engineering operation that must have required immense resources, and the dating matches,” says Mazar. “This is the kind of step one would have expected from a new ruler who wants to turn the city he conquered into a permanent residence, and who has an exceptional vision of the future development of the city.”

### **THE HOUSE OF DAVID- TEL DAN and THE MESHA (MOABITE) STONE**

**TEL DAN:** In Northern Israel, at the ancient Tel Dan, archaeologist Avraham Biran discovered a victory inscription dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The Tel Dan Stele was erected by an Aramaic king in the mid-9th century BCE. .The inscription on the basalt stele, written in Old Aramaic, **describes his accession to the throne and his victory over the king of Israel and over “the House of David.”**

The stele was broken in antiquity; only three fragments have been discovered to date, preserving about 13 lines of text. These pieces were reused as building materials in buildings dating to the mid-8th century BCE, but the writing on the stones is dated through paleography to the mid-9th century BCE.

**“The mentioning of Bet David as the name of the Judean Kingdom in the Aramean stele from Tel Dan, possibly erected by Hazael indicates that approximately a century and a half after his reign, David was recognised throughout the region as the founder of the dynasty that ruled Judah... As to the ninth century, the emergence of the northern State of Israel is now well documented by both archaeology and external sources. ) Amichai Mazar- Archaeology and Israelite History” Pg 163**

“The Discovery of the Tel Dan inscription seemed to dramatically change all but the most extreme minimalists. In 1993, at Tel Dan, an excavation site in Northern Galilee, an inscription was discovered that was conclusively dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE and confirmed that the House of David did indeed exist just as the Bible records. ....It is the first and only inscription that bears the name of the House of David.

Its importance is that it witnesses the existence of a line of Kings in the ninth century BCE that is linked to King David.....this one inscription has convinced the majority of archaeologists that the House of David was a historical group by the ninth century BCE, and that in order for this inscription to have any meaning at all, King David must have been a real person. “ Freund , Digging Through the Bible,page 118.

MOABITE STELE



TEL DAN INSCRIPTION

### The Moabite or Mesha stele:

The Mesha Stele, dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE and now housed in the Louvre, made of black basalt and standing nearly 4 feet tall, contains an inscription dictated by King Mesha of Moab, a contemporary of Kings Omri and Ahab of Israel.

French scholar Andre Lemair concluded that the phrase, “The House of David” appears there also. The most notable feature of the inscription is the use of the **expression “House of David”** (Hebrew, byt dwd) in line 9, making it the earliest known extra-Biblical mention of David and the dynasty he founded. This is crucial for corroborating the Biblical account, since many scholars have at least minimized the importance of the actual David, if not relegated him to fictional myth

### Translation of Relevant Portion:

[I (Mesha) killed Jeho]ram son of [Ahab] king of Israel, and [I] killed [Ahaz]iahu son of [Jehoram kin]g of **the House of David**.

Now King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder; and he used to pay as tribute to the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. But when **Ahab** died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. So King **Jehoram** promptly set out from Samaria and mustered all Israel. At the same time, he sent this message to King **Jehoshaphat** of Judah: “The king of Moab has rebelled against me; will you come with me to make war on Moab?” He replied, “I will go. I will do what you do: my troops shall be your troops, my horses shall be your horses.”

....

**Omri** was the king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab for many days, for Kemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he said – he too – “I will oppress Moab!” In my days did he say [so], but I looked down on him and on his house, **and Israel has gone to ruin, yes, it has gone to ruin forever!**

The Mesha Stele provides direct textual evidence that corroborates a story in the Bible (2 Kings 3:4–27). Even though the Bible and the Mesha Stele provide different accounts of the ongoing troubles between Israel and Moab, the fact that both sides describe a struggle indicates that it did in fact occur. According to the Bible, during the war with Israel the king of Moab sacrificed his firstborn son; the Mesha Stele does not. The Stele reports the capture of Israelite territory and the slaughter of thousands of Israelites, which the Bible omits. They agree that after the mid-ninth century BCE, Israel’s power over Moab declined.