

Lesson 1: Introduction to Biblical Archaeology

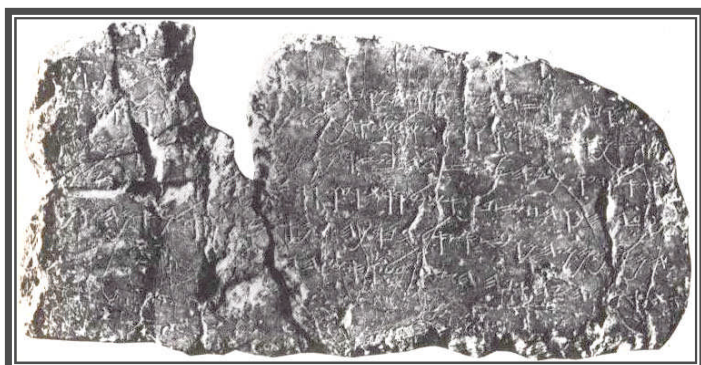


Fig 1. Siloam Inscription

Knowledge of Israel's history is important if one is to understand the message of the Old Testament. Both message and history are inseparably intertwined. Israel's history is divinely ordained as preparatory for the coming of Christ. One cannot understand Him without knowing of those events, which called for and led to His coming.

Archaeology is a tool that can help one understand biblical history better.

- For example, The Siloam Inscription (Fig. 1) ties together both King Hezekiah from [2 Kings 20:20](#) and Jesus in [John chapter 9](#) over 700 years later (see the “Evidence” and “People” sections in the back).

This is the first lesson in a series of thirteen on Old Testament archaeology. In this first lesson archaeology will be introduced: its definition; the values of biblical archaeology; sources of information; and how to conduct an archeological dig. In the following lessons the history and archaeological evidence of the Old Testament will be covered which includes: the Patriarchs starting with Abraham; life in Egypt; the Exodus; the Conquest; the Judges; the Unified Kingdom; the Divided Kingdom; the Exile; and finally the Restoration. There is archaeological evidence for each of these periods.

Definition of Biblical Archaeology

Archaeology is a science that uncovers and explains the past evidence of mans civilization. ^(1, pg. 14) Webster's Dictionary defines archaeology as the systematic study of past human life and culture by the recovery and examination of remaining material evidence. ⁽⁹⁾

- Archaeology is a science because there are scientific procedures that must be followed. It is not a treasure hunt where digging is conducted in a haphazard manner.
- Archeology gradually uncovers, meaning that digging takes place layer-by-layer. However, it is not enough to just uncover something, it must also be studied and explained.

Archeology can take place in the United States with the Native American Indians, it can take place in Mexico with the Aztecs, it can take place north of the Arctic Circle with the Eskimos, it can take place anywhere in the world where civilizations once existed. What is unique about biblical archaeology is that it looks at the past **biblical evidences** of

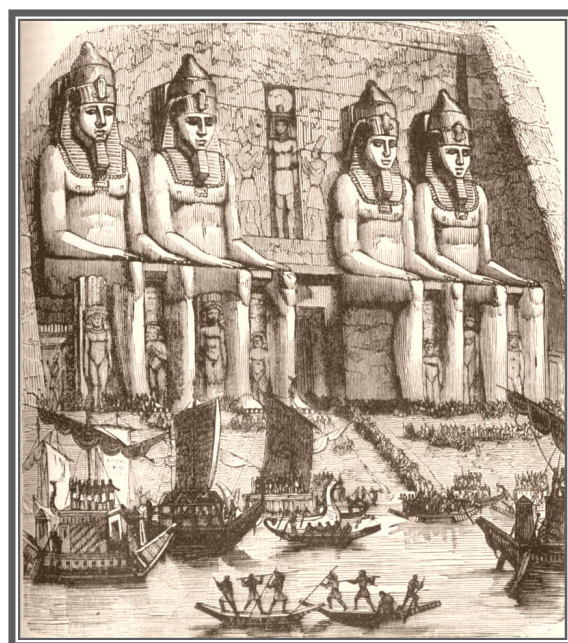


Figure 2. Abu Simbel

mans civilizations. It is confined to biblical places, biblical peoples and biblical periods.

- **Biblical Places:** There are nine different present day countries involved when looking at biblical archaeology (Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Iraq and Iran). See Fig. 10.
 - Several of these countries listed are dangerous and not very hospitable. There is frequent fighting and in most of these countries foreigners are not welcome, making it very difficult to conduct archaeological expeditions.
 - Israelis are doing much in Israel. In 1967 when Israel recovered the West Bank they began to reconstruct their past through archaeological expeditions (Fig. 12). Moshe Dayan (Fig. 3) who used to be Israel's Minister of Defense was also an avid archaeologist. Moshe Dayan is well known for his military accomplishments in the 1948 War of Independence, the Suez Campaign, the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. He was also instrumental in the signing of the 1978 Camp David Accords (Egypt-Israel peace agreement).

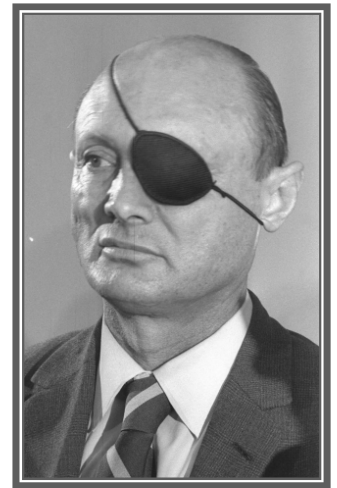


Fig 3. Moshe Dayan

- **Biblical Peoples:** The Bible mentions many different peoples such as the Romans, the Greeks, the Galatians, the Cretans, the Jews, the Samaritans, the Philistines, the Hittites, and the Egyptians (Fig. 11). In studying biblical peoples the goal is to discover any evidence of these civilizations.
- **Biblical Periods:** The period of time for the Old Testament starts with Creation in Genesis 1:1 and runs through the return from exile in Babylon.
 - Note:** Unless otherwise stated all dates discussed will be in "B.C." (Before Christ), which means the number of years before the birth of Jesus Christ. "A.D." stands for Anno Domini, which is Latin for "year of our Lord," and means the number of years since the birth of Jesus Christ. Some resources use "C.E." which stands for "Common Era," and is used in order to avoid Christian references.

The Five Values of Archaeology

There are **Five Values** that the study of archaeology provide:

1. **Illumination:** Archaeology helps to illuminate the people and places in the Bible by providing background information and shedding light on what the world was like during the time of the Old Testament. The Bible is not a full and complete record so the customs, clothing, religion and travel for some of the people in the Bible are sometimes not known or fully understood. Archaeology provides information about the customs of the people, their clothing, material objects, economy; it uncovers information about their trade routes, types of travel, occupations, housing, government and religion. All of this extra-biblical information relating to illumination provides a context for understanding the Old Testament.
2. **Supplementation:** The Bible is not a complete record of mans history even though it begins with Creation. It only comes down to the life of Jesus Christ and the early Church. The Bible deals with a history of God's working among the Jewish people and the doctrine of salvation through His Son. However, there are many other historical events taking place at the same time outside of what God records in His Word. Archaeology helps to supplement understanding of the entire historical situation surrounding the Bible.

- For example, the Old Testament speaks of a Northern Israel king named Omri ([1 Kings 16:16-30](#); [2 Kings 8:26](#); [2 Chron. 22:2](#); [Micah 6:16](#)). King Omri was the father of the wicked king Ahab. Ahab's wife was Jezebel. Omri is only mentioned in about 16 verses in the Old Testament. However, he was such a powerful king that in monuments that mention him there have been found inscriptions where at that time Northern Israel was called "*The House of Omri.*" Because few verses speak of Omri his importance would have not been known unless supplemented outside of the Bible by archaeology. When the Moabite Stone was found (Fig. 4), it provided the answer to a question that had gone unanswered for centuries. The Bible states that David conquered Moab, that Solomon held Moab, and that Moab broke free at the outset of the divided kingdom. But in the next Biblical reference to Moab ([2 Kings 3:4](#)), King Ahab is receiving tribute from King Mesha of Moab.

^{2KI 3:4} Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. **2 Kings 3:4 (NASB)**

Nowhere does the Bible state how or when Moab was reclaimed by Israel. The Moabite Stone provides that information, telling of King Omri's conquest from the Moabite perspective. The Bible does not speak of this accomplishment, but archaeology reveals that King Omri was a more important figure than would have otherwise been known. (1, pg 306 - 310)

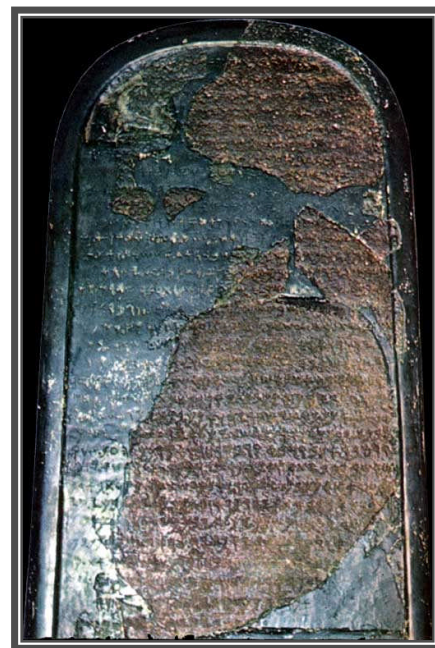


Fig 4. The Moabite Stone (also known as the Mesha Stele)

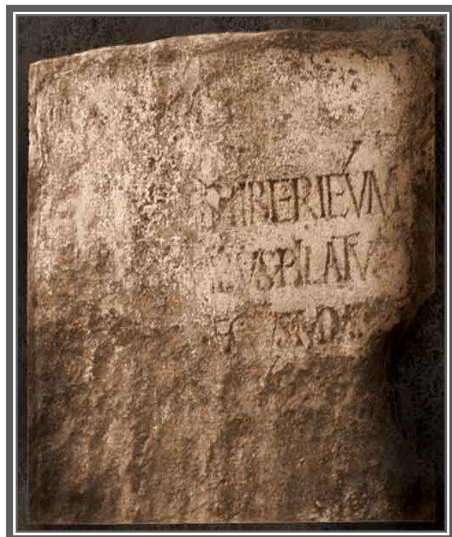


Fig 5. The Pilate Inscription

3. **Confirmation:** Archaeology confirms the historical references made in the Bible.

- Many scholars used to question the existence of a Roman Governor with the name Pontius Pilate, the procurator who ordered Jesus' crucifixion. In June 1961 Italian archaeologists led by Dr. Frova were excavating an ancient Roman amphitheatre near Caesarea and uncovered a limestone block. On the face is an inscription, which is part of a larger dedication to Tiberius Caesar and clearly says, "*Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea.*" This is the only known occurrence of the name Pontius Pilate in any ancient inscription (Fig. 5).
- About a century ago British archaeologist William Ramsay (1851-1939) focused on the book of Acts in an attempt to show it was historically inaccurate. His quest did not turn out as he expected. After decades of research in what is today Israel and Turkey, he carefully retraced the steps of the apostles as described in the book of Acts and shocked the intellectual world when he announced he had converted to Christianity.

His confessed change of mind was in great part to his surprise of the accuracy he found in Luke's narrative in Acts. After decades of examining the historical and geographical details mentioned in Acts, Ramsay concluded: "*Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense... In short this author*

should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.” ^(11 pg. 222) Ultimately Ramsay was knighted for his contributions to the study of archaeology and geography.

4. **Translation:** A fourth value of archaeology is in the translation of the biblical text. This is especially true for the Old Testament, which is written in Hebrew. Hebrew is a Semitic (Northwest Semitic) language. Semitic means a descendant of Shem. Because there are other Semitic languages similar to Hebrew translation is helped every time ancient tablets are found and translated. How this helps is in clarification of rare biblical words, words that are sometimes used only once or twice in the biblical text. When these same rare words are found in a similar Semitic language there is a better understanding of how the word should be translated. There are also cognates, words that are very similar.
5. **Correction:** Archaeology has corrected many of the cynical ideas, false notions, and incorrect claims of biblical critics.
 - For example, it used to be claimed that the Biblical references to Abraham could not possibly be historical because camels are mentioned when Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for Isaac. When they returned the Bible says that Rebekah was on a camel. Some biblical critiques said that this was not possible because camels had not yet been domesticated. Therefore, Abraham is not a historical character. Archaeology however eventually uncovered inscriptions that showed, even earlier than Abraham, that camels were clearly domesticated animals.

GE 24:10 Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

GE 24:11 He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.

GE 24:12 He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.

GE 24:13 "Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water;

GE 24:14 now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'—may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

GE 24:15 Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder.

Genesis 24:10-15 (NASB)

Locating an Archaeological Site

There are four sources of information to locating an archaeological site:

1. **Toponymy:** Toponymy is the study of place names within a region and is a branch of lexicology. There are 475 places that are named in the Bible. ⁽⁷⁾ Of the hundreds of locations that have been identified some names have been preserved exactly, or close to what is used in the Bible.
 - For example, Jerusalem has continuously been occupied since before the time of Joshua, through David, Jesus and on through today. The name has stayed the same throughout history.
2. **Tradition:** The tradition surrounding a particular site will often times assist in identifying a particular biblical location.
 - Indigenous peoples that live around a site, such as Bedouins who travel to seasonal locations, or people that permanently live in an area pass stories about locations down through the generations. It is these stories that can then help an archaeologist locate a site.
 - One problem with tradition and stories is that often times there can be two or three different locations claimed to be a certain place. For example, there are multiple places identified as Cana of

Galilee, where Jesus turned water to wine. Stories and tradition are seldom 100% accurate, but they provide valuable clues.

3. **Literary Sources:** Particular sites can be found from descriptions in historical literary writings.

- For example, when Joshua was conquering territories to establish the nation of Israel he began to divide up the land among the twelve tribes. Joshua chapter 15 describes Judah's portion of which certain cities are located in the Shephelah, the Wilderness, and the Negev regions.

JOS 15:61 In the wilderness: Beth-arabah, Middin and Secacah,
JOS 15:62 and Nibshan and the City of Salt and Engedi; six cities with their villages.
Joshua 15:61-61 (NASB)



Fig 6. The Israel Regions

4. **Archaeological Indications:** Sometimes a location is excavated based on evidences that indicate archaeological artifacts or monuments could be present.

- Sites are discovered by conducting ground or aerial surveys. Aerial surveys are successful because moisture has a tendency to collect around stone structures such as walls and building. When these structures are underground the moisture causes the ground to appear darker in color.
- Another possibility is to randomly cut a hole or trench in a mound of earth where there may be a particular city. If evidence is found an excavation can begin.

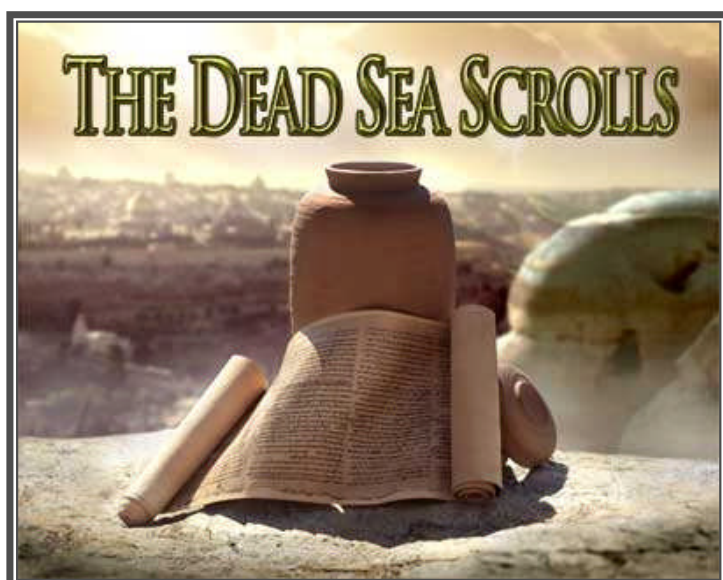


Fig 7. The Dead Sea Scrolls

- Sometimes there are chance discoveries. The most famous occurring in 1947 when a shepherd boy in the hills about 10 miles south of Jericho, just west of the Dead Sea, was tending his sheep. One of the sheep was climbing up in the hills so he threw a rock to scare it down. The rock ended up going into a cave and he heard a smash that sounded like the breaking of glass. He went up to investigate and found a broken jar that contained a scroll. The cave also contained many other jars. The boy took a piece of the scroll to antiquities dealers in Bethlehem and Jerusalem hoping to sell them. The antiquities dealers were astonished; the pieces of scroll were the oldest pieces of

manuscript they had ever seen in their lives. Today these manuscripts are called, “The Dead Sea Scrolls.” They contain biblical and extra-biblical literature. Every book of the Old Testament has been found with the exception of one, the book of Esther. There are eleven different caves that have been discovered.

Modern Archaeology

Archaeology as a science did not really begin until after the 1850’s. Archaeological discoveries made around the 1840’s, 50’s, and even into the 60’s were nothing more than treasure hunts. People were digging into things, people were finding things, people would bring things back to the museums, but nothing was done on a scientific basis.

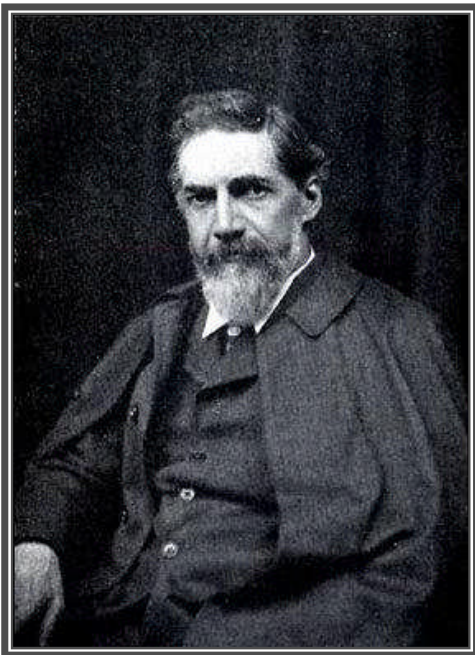


Fig 8. Sir William Flinders Petrie

The father of modern archaeology was Sir William Flinders Petrie (1853-1942). Along with the scientific approach he took with archaeology he identified two very important concepts:

1. **Stratigraphy:** Stratigraphy is the study of rock strata (a bed or layer of sedimentary rock having approximately the same composition throughout). Strata are levels, or layers of ground. What Sir Petrie found in Palestine and Mesopotamia, but not in Egypt, was that cities were found in piles, one heaped on top of another, with each layer representing a certain time of occupation. Sites sometimes have as many as twenty-five, or more, layers of occupation because people would occupy the same site although at different times over a period of two to three thousand years. This might seem like common sense today but what Sir Petrie discovered was that the older civilizations would be on the bottom layers and the more recent civilizations would be on the top layers.
2. **Pottery:** Sir Petrie also discovered the importance that pottery contributes to the science of archaeology. Today many archaeologists specialize in nothing more than pottery. What Sir Petrie found was that because of the abundance of

pottery in virtually all layers and levels of any archaeological dig is that it could be used to date finds. Unlike other materials pottery does not disintegrate, it is made of clay and stays somewhat intact for thousands of years. Pottery can be used to date a site because over time it changes in design, shape, and style, much like automobiles do for us today. Over any given era since the invention of the automobile we can place an automobile in specific time frame based on the shape and style of the car. For example, the wings found on automobiles definitely place it within a time period of mid-50’s to early-60’s. This is the same with pottery; at one period of time the handle will look a certain way, different materials, different ways of manufacture, different glaze, different design, thus a certain time period. Pottery found within a particular level will provide information on who the people were that may have lived in that area and the date of occupation.

The Four P's of Archaeology

How is an archaeological dig actually put together? There are four things needed to conduct an archaeological dig: People; Plans; Physical Objects, and Purse.

1. **People:** Surveyors, photographers, cooks, dirt carriers, students, professors and national workers. All of these people come together to make an archaeological dig actually function at the site.
2. **Plans:** Is a bulldozer going to be used to accomplish the dig or a toothbrush? Generally a grid system is set up where baselines are established. Digging occurs in different directions from these baselines, just like setting up sections in townships. This is done so a frame of reference can be established. When items are found they are labeled, photographed and a summary of its exact location is written. Everything is recorded. As mentioned with Sir William Flinders Petrie, stratigraphy and pottery dating are very important. Whatever object is found is marked, labeled, measured and photographed with a stick indicating centimeters or meters.
3. **Physical Objects:** What is actually found in archaeological digs? Items are classified in three different ways:
 - a. **Monumental** – Monumental ruins would be streets, walls, fountains, fortresses, tombs, temples, churches, and statues.
 - b. **Artifacts** – Tools, weapons, crafts, artwork, utensils, clothing, even chariots.
 - c. **Inscriptions** – These can be on wood, copper plates, stone, clay, coins, cylinders, papyrus and even skins. The real science with inscriptions comes in translation.
4. **Purse:** What about money? Where does the money to do archaeological work come from? Generally it comes from four different sources:
 - a. Schools and Universities.
 - b. Governments will provide funding because of interest in what is found their country.
 - c. Museums will provide funding because ultimately some of the artifacts will be kept at the museum.
 - d. Philanthropic Foundations.What is money needed for?
 - The site itself often needs to be purchased, nearby land, equipment, housing, food, labor, and a dumping site and finally publication of findings.



Fig 9. The Arch of Titus

Evidence

ABU SIMBEL: Abu Simbel is a temple built by Pharaoh Ramses II (1304 – 1238). It is carved in the solid rock above the banks of the Nile River between the First and Second Cataracts. Ramses II built the Great Temple to honor himself and the gods of the state. The four seated statues of Ramses are about 20 meters in height. At the feet of Ramses stand the statues of his favorite children. Many stelae were found at the southern end of the temple, including the famous Marriage Stela. This stela describes the arrival of the Hittite princess to Egypt to marry Ramses following the treaty with the Hittites. The sun shines on Ramses II's statues only two days out of each year: Oct 22 and Feb 22. These two days were his birthday and his coronation day. The walls depict scenes, which show Ramses' greatness in battle. Ramses was particularly proud of his victory at the battle of Kadesh and depicted this on numerous monuments including this temple.

MOABITE STONE (also called the MESHA STELE): A basalt stone, bearing an inscription by King Mesha (king of Moab), which was discovered at Dibon, Jordan by Klein, a German missionary at Jerusalem, in 1868. It is 3 1/2 feet high, 2 feet wide and rounded at the top. It consists of thirty-four lines, written in Hebrew-Phoenician characters. It was set up by King Mesha as a record and memorial of his victories. It records: (1) Mesha's wars with Omri, (2) his public buildings, and (3) his wars against Horonaim. This inscription in a remarkable degree supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha recorded in [2 Kings 3:4-27](#). This ancient monument, recording the heroic struggles of King Mesha with Omri and Ahab, was erected about B.C. 850.

PILATE INSCRIPTION: It wasn't long ago when many scholars were questioning the actual existence of a Roman Governor with the name Pontius Pilate, the procurator who ordered Jesus' crucifixion. In June 1961 Italian archaeologists led by Dr. Fova were excavating an ancient Roman amphitheatre near Caesarea-on-the-Sea (Maritima) and uncovered this interesting limestone block. On the face is a monumental inscription, which is part of a larger dedication to Tiberius Caesar, which clearly says that it was from "*Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea.*"

SILOAM INSCRIPTION: The pool of Siloam was originally constructed by King Hezekiah who ruled from 716-687 B.C. as recorded in [2 Kings 20:20](#):

[2Ki 20:20](#) As for the other events of Hezekiah's reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?
[2 Kings 20:20 \(NIV\)](#)

An inscription was discovered in 1880 at the sight of the pool of Siloam describing how two teams of Jewish tunnelers digging towards one another, finally met to finish the construction of the tunnel. The discovery is known as the Siloam inscription and can be found at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum in Turkey. The inscription reads:

"The account of breakthrough is as follows. While the tunnelers were working with their picks, each toward the other, and while there was still 5 feet of rock to go through, the rock split to the south and to the north, and the voices of each were heard calling one to another. And at that moment the laborers broke through striking pick against pick. Then the water began to flow from the spring to the pool for a distance of 1,900 feet. And the height of the tunnel above the heads of the laborers was 160 feet."

In the gospel of John chapter 9 it is recorded that Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth at the Pool of Siloam.

[Jn 9:1](#) As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

[Jn 9:2](#) His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

[Jn 9:3](#) "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

[Jn 9:4](#) As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.

[Jn 9:5](#) While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

[Jn 9:6](#) Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

[Jn 9:7](#) "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam." So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

[John 9:1-7 \(NIV\)](#)

People^(3 & 4)

ABRAHAM, ABRAM: THE FATHER OF A MULTITUDE. The original name of the youngest son of Terah was Abram, meaning “father of height.” The name Abraham was given to him when the promise of a numerous progeny was renewed to him by God ([Gen. 11:26; 17:5, 9](#)). Abraham’s place in the Bible’s portrait gallery is altogether unique and unapproachable. He stands out as a landmark in the spiritual history of the world. Chosen of God to become the father of a new spiritual race, the file leader of a mighty host, the revelation of God found in him one of its most important epochs. In himself, there was not much to make him worthy of such a distinction. His choice was all of grace. Abraham’s life is given us in detail, and we know him as we know few men of the Bible. He was from the great and populous city of Ur, and therefore a Gentile although he became the first Hebrew. He was a rough, simple, venerable Bedouin-like sheep master. He uttered no prophecy, wrote no book, sang no song, and gave no laws. Yet in the long list of Bible saints he alone is spoken of as “the father of the faithful” and as “the friend of God” ([Isa. 41:8](#)). Let us briefly sketch his story and character.

- I. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, of parents who were heathen. Little is known of him until he was seventy years old, a striking proof that he had yielded himself to God before he left his heathen home for the far-off land of Canaan.
 - II. He received a distinct revelation from God, and of God, but we are not told how and when. This, however, we do know: He gave up a certainty for an uncertainty and went out not knowing whither he went. Willingly he surrendered the seen for the unseen.
 - III. He was taught the lesson of patience, of waiting upon the Eternal God. It was many years before the promise of God was fulfilled to him—promises three in number—of a *country*, Canaan; of *posterity*, as the stars of heaven; of a *spiritual seed*, through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.
 - IV. He believed as he waited. His soul fed upon the promises of God. He believed God in the face of long delay and also amid difficulties that seemed insuperable. This is why he is called “the father of all them that believe.”
 - V. He was renowned for his active, working, living faith ([Gen. 15:6](#)). Abraham believed in God and it was counted to him for righteousness.
 - VI. He was subject to failures. His character, like the sun, had its spots. Abraham’s conduct to Hagar on two occasions, in sending her away, is painful to remember. Then his departure from Canaan into Egypt when the famine was on was surely not an act of faith. The falsehood which on two occasions he told with regard to Sarah his wife gives us a glimpse into a natural character somewhat cowardly, deceitful and distrustful ([Gen. 12:19; 20:2](#)).
 - VII. He was called to offer up special sacrifices. The first is fully described in Genesis fifteen, where the five victims offered in sacrifice to God were symbolic and typical of the whole Mosaic economy to come. Then we have the offering up of Isaac, an act of faith on Abraham’s part and yet a trial of faith ([Gen. 22](#)). What a demand God made! But Abraham did not withhold his only son of promise. What God wanted was Abraham’s heart, not Isaac’s life. So when the knife was raised to slay Isaac, a provided substitute appeared. After this sacrifice Abraham received the testimony that he had pleased God.
- The Bible offers us many types of Christ, Isaac being one of the chiefest, but Abraham is *the only type in Scripture of God the Father*. Abraham so loved God as to give up his only son, and centuries before Christ was born entered into the inner heart of [John 3:16](#). After serving God faithfully, Abraham died when 175 years of age.

AHAB: FATHER’S BROTHER. *The son of Omri*, and his successor as the seventh king of Israel ([1 Kings 16:28-33](#)). Ahab was an able and energetic warrior. His victories over the Syrians pushed the borders of his kingdom to the border of Damascus. Great renown became his, also great wealth indicated by the ivory palace he built for himself ([1 Kings 21:1; 22:39](#)). Success, however, made him greedy for still more. Not since Solomon’s time had a king been so victorious as Ahab, and what was a little matter like Naboth’s vineyard to one who had grasped so much? With his wealth, Ahab bought all he wanted. One tenant, however, could not be bought out. Sentiment, affection and tender memories were more to Naboth than all the king’s money. Ahab established idolatry. He was a dangerous innovator and a patron of foreign gods ([1 Kings 16:31-33; 21:26](#)). He was a weak-minded man, lacking moral fiber and righteousness ([1 Kings 21:4](#)). He was the tool of his cruel, avaricious wife ([1 Kings 21:7, 25](#)). His doom, along with that of Jezebel, was foretold by Elijah ([1 Kings 21:22](#)) and by Micaiah ([1 Kings 22:28](#)).

HEZEKIAH: JEHOVAH IS STRENGTH or A STRONG SUPPORT IS JEHOVAH. Also given as Hizkiah, Hizkijah, Ezekias. *Son and successor of Ahaz* as king of Judah ([2 Kings 16:20](#)). He is referred to in over one hundred references in 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah. Hezekiah was one of the best kings who ever sat upon the throne of Judah, and is distinguished as the greatest in faith of all Judah’s kings ([2 Kings 18:5](#)). This good king is to be admired when one remembers his family background. Having such a wicked, apostate father as Ahaz, the wonder is that his son became the noble king he did. With Hezekiah’s ascent to the throne at the age of twenty-five there began a period of religious revival in which he was encouraged by the noblest and most eloquent of the Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, who knew how to carry his religion into his politics. Hezekiah was a man who prayed about the difficulties and dangers overtaking him. What faith and confidence in God he revealed when he spread Sennacherib’s insolent letter before the Lord. Both Hezekiah and Isaiah defied mighty Assyria, God using one angel to slay one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. The king knew how to pray about personal matters as well as military dangers. When smitten with a fatal illness, he turned his face to the wall and prayed. Isaiah, his friend and counselor, came to him

with a message from God that he would not die but live. **“I will add unto thy days fifteen years.”** Hezekiah asked with all his heart that he might live, and God continued his life. At the time of his sickness, Hezekiah had no son, and this fact possibly added to his desire to live. Three years after his recovery Manasseh was born, who became a curse upon the earth and an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Here, then, was one of the results of Hezekiah’s answered prayer. It might have been better for Judah if Hezekiah had died without such an heir. Many prayers we offer are mistakes. God graciously grants our requests but “brings leanness to our souls” (Ps. 106:15). Perhaps Hezekiah’s sin began in his unwillingness to go to heaven when God sent for him (2 Kings 20:1-3).

Hezekiah’s simple faith in God was the source and secret of his strength. He believed God ruled among the armies of heaven and of earth. His faith was the intuitive perception that God was near—a real Personality and not a mere tendency making for righteousness. The loss of faith is ultimately the loss of moral power. One of the main lessons of Hezekiah’s life is, *have faith in God*.

Hezekiah lost favor with God because of pride. After all the divine blessings showered upon him, he allowed his heart to be lifted up with pride. Vanity and self-sufficiency led the king astray. His heart became obsessed with his household treasures. He turned from God to goods. “Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 32:24, 25). Sin never ends with the person committing it. The four crises Hezekiah faced were: 1) The crisis of choice, and he chose to forsake the idols of his father and purge the kingdom of idolatry (2 Chron. 28:23, 25; 2 Kings 18:22); 2) The crisis of invasion (2 Chron. 32:1-19). Prayer brought deliverance (2 Chron. 32:20, 21); 3) The crisis of sickness. Obedience furnished the foundation of the king’s prayer for healing (Isa. 38:1-5); 4) The crisis of prosperity. Alas, Hezekiah manifested pride when he displayed his treasures to the ungodly (Isa. 39).

ISAAC: HE LAUGHETH or LAUGHING ONE. *The son of Abraham and Sarah*, who was born at Gerar when Abraham was one hundred years of age and Sarah was about ninety years old (Gen. 17:19, 21; 21:3-12; 22:2-9). Isaac is one of the few cases in the Bible in which God selected a name for a child and announced it before he was born. In the Old Testament we have Isaac, Ishmael, Solomon, Josiah, Cyrus and Isaiah’s son; in the New Testament, John the Baptist and Jesus.

Isaac’s beautiful and suggestive name, “he laughed,” commemorates the two laughings at the promise of God—the laughing of the father’s joy and the laughing of Sarah’s incredulity which soon passed into penitence and faith (Gen. 21:6). Isaac was the child of the covenant, “I will establish My covenant *with him*.” To three patriarchs in succession was this covenant specifically given: to Abraham, as he left Chaldea (Gen. 12:3); to Isaac, when in Canaan during the famine (Gen. 26:4); to Jacob, at Bethel (Gen. 28:14). Isaac, however, was the first to inherit the covenant, and to him God gave the whole inheritance of Abraham (Gen. 24:35). We have no record of Isaac’s early life apart from the fact that he was circumcised when eight days of age (Gen. 21:4). Doubtless as a lad he became God’s child in heart and life, ever mindful of the covenant he was heir to. When, according to Josephus, Isaac was twenty-five years of age, he was taken from Beer-sheba to the land of Moriah, where, as the burnt offering, Abraham presented him to God. While we have Abraham’s unquestioning faith in his submission to the divine command to offer up his only son, we must not forget Isaac’s supreme confidence in his father and also his willing consent to become the victim (Gen. 22:12; 26:5; Heb. 11:17). Thus in Isaac we have a type of Him who *gave Himself* for our sins. From the day of his surrender to death, Isaac became a dedicated man. “The altar sanctified the gift.”

When his mother Sarah died, Isaac was a man of thirty-six, and was deeply grieved over the death of his mother. Comfort was his when he took Rebekah as his wife to help fill the vacant place in his heart. To the credit of Isaac it must be said that he was the only one of the patriarchs who had but one wife. It is also perfectly clear from the ancient idyll, one of the most beautiful in all literature, that Isaac left the choice of his wife to God. When the caravan bearing Rebekah neared home, Isaac was in the fields *meditating* or “praying,” as the margin expresses it (Gen. 24:63).

For many years Isaac and Rebekah were childless, but God heard Isaac’s prayers and Rebekah gave birth to twins, Jacob and Esau. Isaac seems to have outlived his wife, and died at the age of 180 (Gen. 35:28). For some fifty years Isaac was almost blind, a sad and pitiful lot for God’s chosen one.

The character of Isaac, beautiful though it was in many ways, yet carried a few blots. He followed his father, Abraham, in deceitfulness when he called his wife his sister, bringing upon himself the rebuke of Abimelech. He also loved “savory food,” which should have been alien to a man so calm and still, lord of his passion and himself. Then in the matter of Esau and the blessing, Isaac surely rebelled against the Lord’s purpose.

Among the commendable features of his character, mention can be made of Isaac’s submission (Gen. 22:6, 9); meditation (Gen. 24:63); instinctive trust in God (Gen. 22:7, 8); deep devotion (Gen. 24:67; 25:21); peaceableness (Gen. 26:20-22); prayerfulness (Gen. 26:25); faith (Heb. 11:16, 17). “The fear of Isaac” (Gen. 31:42, 53), means the God tremblingly adored by the patriarch.

JEZEBEL: (1 Kings 16:31; 18:4-19; 19:1, 2; 21:5-25; 2 Kings 9) *Name Meaning:* This heartless woman with a bloody history belied the name she bore, for Jezebel means, “chaste, free from carnal connection”; but by nature she was a most licentious woman. She was a voluptuary, with all the tawdry arts of a wanton woman. Thus no name could have been more inappropriate for such a despised female. *Family Connections:* She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and both king and priest of Baal worshipers. Their gods were Baal and Ashtaroath or Astarte, with their innumerable number of priests, 450 of whom Ahab installed in the magnificent temple to the Sun-god he had built in Samaria. Another 400 priests were housed in a sanctuary Jezebel

erected for them, and which she fed at her own table. It was this heathen woman who married Ahab, king of Northern Israel, and who in so doing was guilty of a rash and impious act, which resulted in evil consequences. As a Jew, Ahab sinned against his Hebrew faith in taking as his wife the daughter of a man whose very name, Ethbaal, meant, “A Man of Baal.”

MESHA (Vulgate: *Messa*): *Meaning:* Middle district. A king of Moab, the son of Chemosh-Gad, a man of great wealth in flocks and herds (2 Kings 3:4). After the death of Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead, Mesha shook off the yoke of Israel; but on the ascension of Jehoram to the throne of Israel, that king sought the help of Jehoshaphat in an attempt to reduce the Moabites again to their former condition. The united armies of the two kings came unexpectedly on the army of the Moabites, and gained over them an easy victory. The whole land was devastated by the conquering armies, and Mesha sought refuge in his last stronghold, Kir-harasheth. Reduced to despair, he ascended the wall of the city, and there, in the sight of the allied armies, offered his first-born son a sacrifice to Chemosh, the fire-god of the Moabites. This fearful spectacle filled the beholders with horror, and they retired from before the besieged city, and recrossed the Jordan laden with spoil (2 Kings 3:25-27). The exploits of Mesha are recorded in the Phoenician inscription on a block of black basalt found at Dibon, in Moab, usually called the “Moabite stone.”

OMRI: A BUNDLE OF CORN, IMPETUOUS or JEHOVAH APPORTIONS. *Father of Ahab*, captain of the host, afterwards made king instead of Zimri who had slain Elah (1 Kings 16:16-30; 2 Kings 8:26; 2 Chron. 22:2; Micah 6:16). Omri was one of the most important kings of Israel and the founder of a dynasty. He reigned for twelve years.

PONTIUS PILATE: This man was probably connected with the Roman family of the Pontii, and called “Pilate” from the Latin pileatus, i.e., “wearing the pileus”, which was the “cap or badge of a manumitted slave,” indicating that he was a “freedman,” or the descendant of one. He was the sixth in the order of the Roman procurators of Judea (A.D. 26-36). His headquarters were at Caesarea, but he frequently went up to Jerusalem. His reign extended over the period of the ministry of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ, in connection with whose trial his name comes into prominent notice (Matt 27:19,27,28; Luke 23:2,4,11,12; John 18:33,37,38, 19:2). Pilate hated the Jews whom he ruled, and in times of irritation freely shed their blood. They returned his hatred with cordiality, and accused him of every crime, misadministration, cruelty, and robbery. References to him, however, are found in the Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28, and in 1 Tim. 6:13. In A.D. 36 the governor of Syria brought serious accusations against Pilate, and he was banished to Vienne in Gaul, where, according to tradition, he committed suicide.

REBEKAH, REBECCA: *Scripture References*—Genesis 22:23; 24; 25:20-28; 26:6-35; 27; 28:5; 29:12; 35:8; 49:31; Romans 9:6-16. *Name Meaning*—Rebekah is another name with an animal connection. Although not belonging to any animal in particular, it has reference to animals of a limited class and in a peculiar condition. The name means a “tie rope for animals” or “a noose” in such a rope. Its root is found in a noun meaning a “hitching place” or “stall” and is connected with a “tied-up calf or lamb,” a young animal peculiarly choice and fat. Applied to a female, the figure suggests her beauty by means of which men are snared or bound. Thus another meaning of Rebekah is that of “captivating.” If, then, Rebekah means “a noosed cord,” the loop was firmly around Isaac’s neck. When Isaac took her as his bride he forgot his grief for his dead mother, and lived happily with his wife for twenty years during which time they had no children.

Family Connections: Rebekah is first mentioned in the genealogy of the descendants of Nahor, Abraham’s brother (Genesis 22:20-24). When the pilgrims set out from the Ur of the Chaldees, Nahor was one of the party, and settled down at Charan where Terah, his father, died. Among Nahor’s sons was Bethuel who, by an unknown wife, became the father of Rebekah, the sister of Laban. Rebekah married Isaac the son of Abraham, by whom she had two sons, Esau and Jacob.

SHEM, SEM: RENOWN, or NAME. *A son of Noah*, and ancestor of Christ (Gen. 5:32). From his name, it is to be inferred that Shem was a distinguished person. The men of Babel sought to make themselves a name (Gen. 11:4) and become, thereby, rivals of Shem. The greatness of Shem arose from the fact that he was a forerunner of Christ. Shem’s name meaning “renown” foreshadowed the greater name “above every name” before which every knee shall bow (Luke 3:36). In offering praise to God, Noah said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem” (Gen. 9:26).

TIBERIUS: SON OF TIBER. *The stepson of Augustus* and third Emperor of Rome, A.. 14-37 (Luke 3:1). His full name was Tiberius Caesar Augustus. A Souter reminds us that Tiberius was “an able general and a competent Emperor, but the unhappy experiences of his early life made him suspicious and timorous, and he put many of his rivals or supposed rivals to death. In his later years he was much under the influence of a villainous schemer, Sejanus.”

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Fig 10. Map of Middle East

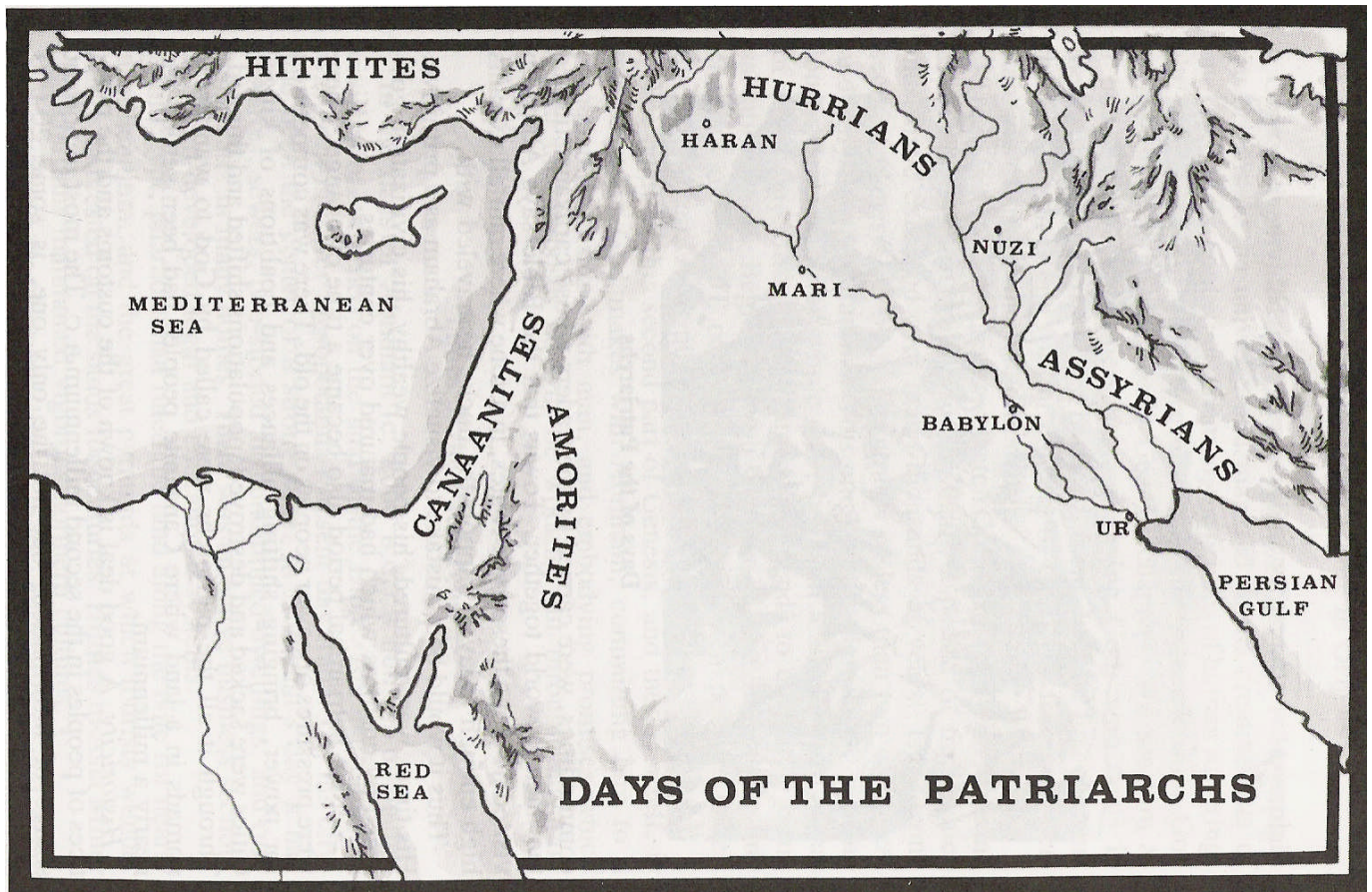


Fig 11. Days of the Patriarchs

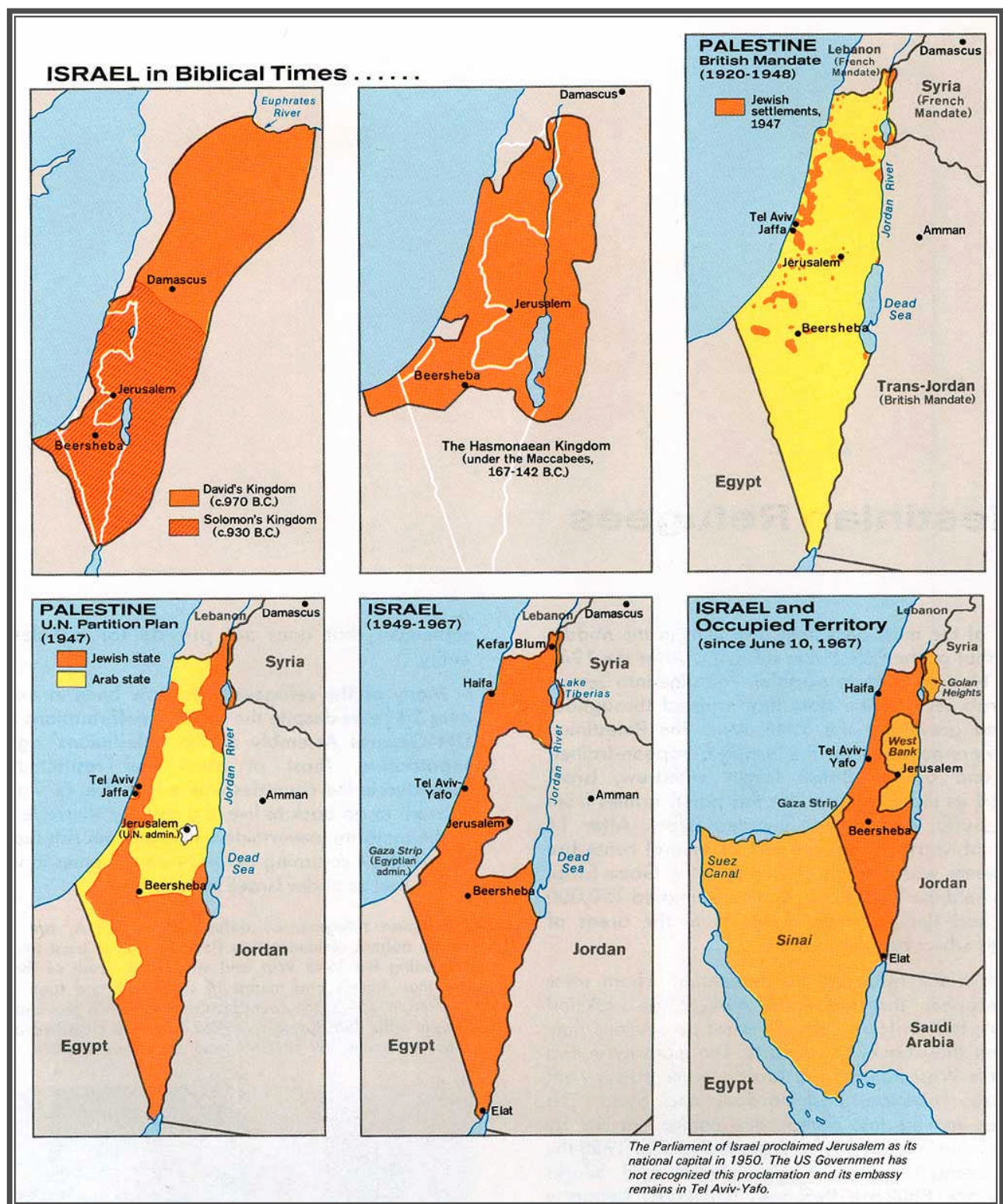


Fig 12. Map of Israel Through History

