

SUMMARIES

THE SECOND SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT RAMAT RAḤEL

by Y. AHARONI

The excavator reports on the excavations, carried out by a joint expedition of the Department of Antiquities, the Hebrew University and the Israel Exploration Society during August—September 1959.¹

During this season a considerable area in the centre of the tell was excavated, and remains of the same three periods were found as in 1954:

a) Near the Byzantine church two large halls were cleared, originally arched over; they probably formed part of a monastery and had two building periods (strata II-III). The rest of the tell was unoccupied at this period and this strengthens the identification of the site with the Kathisma Church.

b) In the level dating to the period of the Second Temple (stratum IV), a number of industrial installations were uncovered, including ovens, pits and basins, whose purpose is still unclear.

c) In the lowest level (stratum V), dating from the Judean Monarchy, part of the well-preserved northern citadel wall was cleared and a secret subterranean postern was discovered. On the outside, the postern exit is nearly at ground level, but inside the wall the passage is high enough to walk almost upright. It is covered with heavy blocks of stone laid across the width of the passage, and slightly hollowed out inside to form an arch.

In most of the area between the southern and northern casemate walls, the floor of the courtyard was found, paved with crushed and smoothed limestone. A considerable part of the citadel, which covers an area of about one acre, seems thus to have consisted of an extensive courtyard. Two additional fragments of proto-Aeolic capitals have been found this season.

The most interesting finds of the season is the inscribed material, comprising 4 stamped bricks of the Tenth Legion, a Hebrew ostrakon with two names (*Aḥiyahu/Ḥasdiyahu*) and 98 seal impressions on jar-handles, dating partly from the Judean Monarchy and partly from the post-exilic period.

To the first group belong 4 private seal impressions (to be published separately) and 29 *lamelekh* stamps. Of particular interest is an impression with the inscription to *Nera* (son of) *Shebna*, impressed on the same handle as a *lamelekh* stamp. This is the first time that a "royal stamp" has been found on the same handle with a "private stamp".

The post-exilic stamped jar-handles comprise 38 *Yehud* stamps of various types. The most important are four of a completely new type

1) For the first season cf. *BIES* 19, 1955, pp. 147-174; 20, 1956, pp. 44-51.

bearing the inscription: *Yhwd pḥw'*, *Yehud Paḥwa* in Aramaic, i.e. the name of the province and the title *peḥa* (governor). One of the seal impressions reads: *Yhwd yhw'zr pḥw'*, which is interpreted as "Judah, Yehoazar the governor". It is suggested that these stamps belong to the 4th century B.C.

The finds and periods of occupation strengthen the identification of the place with Beth ha-Kerem, known now also from two new passages of the Dead Sea scrolls. As to the purpose for which the royal citadel was built so near Jerusalem, it is suggested that this was the "several house" built for the leper King Uzziah. It was called the "House of the Vineyard"; around it a settlement developed, which became fairly important in the period of the Second Temple.

A HEBREW LINTEL-INSCRIPTION FROM THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE OF NABRATEIN *

by N. AVIGAD

The inscription carved on a lintel of the ancient synagogue of Nabratein (talmudic Kefar *Niburaya*) in Upper Galilee has been an enigma of long standing. It is now deciphered as follows:

"(According) to the number four hundred and ninety four years after the destruction (of the Temple), the house (=synagogue) was built during the office of Hanina son of Lezer and Luliana son of Yudan."

It is for the first time that a dated inscription has been found at a Galilean synagogue. The resulting date, A.D. 564, however, seems to be too late for this synagogue, which evidently belongs to the Galilean group of early synagogues, generally assigned to the Late Roman period, i.e. the late second to late fourth centuries. It is therefore suggested that this inscription was added to the lintel later on, and that it commemorated the rebuilding of the earlier synagogue.

EXCAVATIONS AT TELL MOR (1959 SEASON)

by M. DOTAN

Tell Mor lies about one km. from the seashore, on the north bank of Naḥal Lachish (Wadi Sukreir). A first season of excavations was carried out on this site on behalf of the Department of Antiquities; the work was financed mainly by the Ashdod Development Corporation.

The excavations covered an area of about 300 sq. m. on the top of the tell. Twelve settlement strata were uncovered, which date from the late phase of the Middle Canaanite (Bronze) Age (c. 1600 B.C., stratum XII)

* The full text of this article in English is shortly to appear in the forthcoming *Bulletin*, Louis M. Rabinowitz Fund for the Exploration of Ancient Synagogues, Vol. III.

to the end of the eighth century B.C. (stratum II) and a Hellenistic stratum I. Strata XII-VIII were excavated in a trial trench only.

In levels XI, X (LB I), part of a floor was cleared which belonged to a temple or high place; in its centre were the horns of *dama mesopotamica*, surrounded by small pottery offering vessels, lamps, chalices, etc. The most important find here was a seven-wick lamp, similar to a MB II one found at Nahariyah.

Strata IX-VII belong to the Late Bronze Age II (14th—13th centuries B.C.). Part of a large building was uncovered in stratum IX; its wall, which was cleared over a length of 10 m., still stands to a height of 2 m. and it is probable that this was the main store building of the town. Imported pottery vessels found in these strata point to close trade relations with the Phoenician coast and Cyprus. A tomb of LBII was found on the tell slope; the burial method, as well as the pottery found in the tomb are foreign.

Stratum VII belongs to the second half of the 13th cent. B.C. A layer of debris 1.5 m. deep bears witness to a total destruction in the second half of the 13th century B.C. The site probably lay deserted for some time thereafter.

In strata VI-V (Early Israelite, 12th cent. B.C.), the corner of a large building was cleared this season. The solidly built mud-brick walls show that it was a fortress.

Only a small unprotected settlement existed at Tell Mor in strata IV-III, the period of Philistine occupation. Stratum III was destroyed probably at the beginning of the 10th century B.C. Almost nothing remains of a fortress of the 8th century B.C. — perhaps the fortress built by King Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi, 6), and destroyed by Sargon II.

On the slopes of the tell were found plastered basins and a deep well containing numerous Hellenistic pottery vessels. Beneath the pottery were thousands of purple *murex* shells used for dyeing.

The results of the first season of excavations confirm the hypothesis that Tell Mor served as an inland port on Nahal Lachish till the 8th century B.C., when the port of Ashdod was transferred southward to Ashdod-Yam (Minet el-Isdud).

WAS THERE AN ANCIENT "BOOK OF THE WARS OF THE LORD"?

by N. H. TUR-SINAI

(Numbers xxi, 14)

It is generally assumed that the Pentateuch quotes an ancient "Book of the Wars of the Lord", and such a book is therefore mentioned in dictionaries and commentaries as one of the early sources of the Bible. The passage in question, Numbers xxi, 14, is usually translated: "Wherefore

it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, what he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon." However, this interpretation, starting a sentence quoted from the book with the particle *את*, without any *verbum regens*, is linguistically impossible. As a matter of fact, the Septuagint translates more fittingly: "Wherefore it is said *in a book*, a war of the Lord has set on fire Zcob and the brooks of Arnon." The same understanding of the text is attested, according to A. Sperber's new edition of the Targum Onkelos from ancient editions and manuscripts (Leiden, 1959), saying: "Therefore it is said *in the Book* (בספרא), The Lord has made wars on the Red Sea and on the brooks (at the) Arnon." Thus Numbers xxi, 14 literally means: "Wherefore it is said in the book: *there were wars of the Lord . . .*", just as is said about Amalek in Exodus xvii, 16: "The Lord *has war* with Amalek from generation to generation." In our case the Lord's war is described as being fought (a) against Waheb (in Septuagint: Zoob) at the Red Sea, (b) against the brooks at the Arnon. Therefore, instead of "Waheb", we should read "Rahab", the biblical term for the Egyptian Sea. The Lord fought against Rahab at the Red Sea and against the brooks at the Arnon.

The Book of Wars of the Lord as one of the sources of the biblical report of ancient history must be definitely discarded.

THE THIRD EXCAVATION CAMPAIGN AT ANCIENT JAFFA

by J. KAPLAN

The excavations were mainly in two areas (B, C) on both sides of area A excavated in 1956. The order of strata was unchanged, except that stratum VI was seen now to be part of stratum V. It appeared that all work done so far was in the area of a MB II acropolis with thick walls. Two walls of strata IV and V were cleared; ashlar blocks of gate-posts of stratum V were found, with hieroglyphic inscriptions, which complete the titles of Ramses II discovered in 1956. The gate was seen breached in the wall of an earlier stage of MB II. In area A four building levels from the 15th and 14th cent. B.C. were found below the pavement stones in the south section. Bichrome ware, Cypriote and Egyptian imports were found in these levels. In area C a locus of 15th cent. ware was found above a MBA wall, with a Hellenistic stone wall above it. It appears that strata IV and V belong to the 13th cent. B.C.; that the Ramses II gate was burnt towards the end of his reign, and stratum IV under Ramses III, probably by the "peoples of the sea".

The Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Israel Exploration Society was held on 18—21 October 1959, on the theme "At the Entry of the Sea". A full report of the proceedings appears in *Israel Exploration Journal*, 10, 1960, pp. 46—55.