

4.5 LITERACY AND INSCRIPTIONS

4.5.1 Introduction

A number of ancient texts from the Near East have provided background information for the elucidation of the history of the Northern Kingdom and neighboring lands. Many of these texts have been discovered fairly recently as a result of archaeological excavations. Some texts provide historical information that supplements our knowledge of biblical history. Some texts help us reconstruct the religions and cultures of ancient peoples with whom the Israelites had contact.

This material on literacy and inscriptions will be considered according to the various languages of the texts.

4.5.2 Assyrian Inscriptions

4.5.2.1 Introduction to Assyrian Inscriptions

The Assyrian Kings that ruled during the time of Omri (876 BCE) to the Exile into Assyria (721 BCE) are listed below, along with those who, for the next one-hundred years collected or recorded the earlier relevant history. This reconstructed time line and spelling of names is based on that of the book *Assyrian Sculpture* (Reade 1986:70).

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Ashurnasirpal II | (883-859 BCE) |
| Shalmaneser III | (858-824 BCE) |
| Shamshi-Adad V | (825-811 BCE) |
| Adadnirari III | (810-783 BCE) |
| Shalmaneser IV | (782-773 BCE) |
| Ashurdan III | (772-755 BCE) |
| Ashurnirari V | (754-745 BCE) |
| Tiglath-pileser III (Pul) | (745-727 BCE) |

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Shalmaneser V | (727-722 BCE) |
| Sargon II | (721-705 BCE) |
| Sennacherib | (704-681 BCE) |
| Esarhaddon | (680-669 BCE) |
| Ashurbanipal | (668-627 BCE) |
| Ashuretelilani | (630-623 BCE) |

The Assyrian annals mention contacts with some ten Hebrew kings: Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Menahem, Hoshea, Pekah, Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh

Locations for where the Assyrian inscriptions were found will be indicated below under each inscription discussed.

The ability to decipher cuneiform writing is traced back to Sir Henry Cresicke Rawlinson (1810-1895). His work led to the understanding of Assyrian inscriptions; which provided great insight into the history of the Northern Kingdom and neighboring lands. Before going into the details regarding some of the Assyrian inscriptions, an overview of Rawlinson's contribution is presented.

Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, a diplomat and Assyriologist, was born in 1810 in England. He entered military service in 1827 with the East India Company. Spending much time in the Near East as a British army officer, he knew modern Persian and other Oriental languages.

The initial decipherment of cuneiform was accomplished at the beginning of the nineteenth century by George Grotefend, but he was unable to arrive to a solution and his later work was criticized. Rawlinson did not know about Grotefend's work. He decided to investigate a cuneiform inscription of considerable length that was engraved on a

mountain close to the town of Behistun, Iran. Here he found a panel of sculptured figures with many lines of cuneiform in the same three scripts which he had seen on several other smaller Persian artifacts.

Between the years 1835 and 1839, Rawlinson, with great risk of his life, succeeded in copying most of the great Behistun inscription. He began by assuming that the three different types of cuneiform writing were the same thing.

One of the three scripts was simpler than the others. Its characters were less complicated in form and fewer in number. It appeared to be alphabetic while the others seemed to be pictographs, ideographs and phonetic characters. The writing was Old Persian and this was the beginning of his work.

Through his discoveries, he soon hypothesized the texts belonged to the period of the Archaemenid dynasty in Persia, of the Old Persian Empire (550-330 BCE). The Behistun inscription was set up by Darius the Great of Persia about 519 BCE. It gave an account of how Darius came to the throne after the death of Cambyses and how he overcame those who threatened to destroy the unity of the Persian Empire. This statement of Darius was widely known throughout his realm. One copy in the Aramaic language and alphabet was found written on papyrus in southern Egypt.

Once the Persian text had been translated, it was possible to turn to the study of the other two languages. One was correctly assumed to be Babylonian. This discovery is very important to students of Assyriology since Babylonian and Assyrian languages were both Semitic and closely related. The third type was called Median or Scythian. It was the most difficult of all. As Grotefend had guessed, it had a relation to the Elamite tongue, the

language of Susa (Susian). It is completely unrelated to either Persian or to any of the Semitic languages.

It was soon learned that the cuneiform system had been used by many different groups and for writing a variety of languages. Semitic speaking Babylonians and Assyrians used the cuneiform for hundreds of years, but later discovery was shown that the Sumerians were the inventors and were using it before 3000 BCE (Mitchell 1988:84-85). For more information about where the Assyrian inscriptions were discovered see section 4.4.2, Assyrian Palaces, in this dissertation.

4.5.2.2 Annals of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE)

At this time in Israelite history the Aramaeans under Ben Hadad I constituted the primary threat to Israel. But during the reign of Omri the Aramaeans were held in check by Ashurnasirpal II. He was overrunning Upper Mesopotamia, bringing the Aramaean states one by one to their knees. The fortunes of Aram and Israel were linked with the fortunes of the awakening Assyrian Empire whose encroachments upon the West led to the many changes of alliances and hostilities.

The annals of Ashurnasirpal II describe the invasion of the west in this way:

At that time I seized the entire extent of the Lebanon Mountains and reached the Great Sea of the Ammurru country. I cleaned my weapons in the deep sea. The tribute of the seacoast, from the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, Byblus, Mahallata, Maiza, Kaiza, Ammurru, and (of) Arvad which is in the inlet by the sea, their tribute I received and they embraced my feet" (Pritchard 1973a: 276).

From this account it seems that he left Damascus untouched.

4.5.2.3 Ashurnasirpal II Banquet Inscription

In 1951, a large sandstone block was discovered near the doorway to the throne-room of the palace of Ashurnasirpal II.

It showed a carving of the king and contained a inscription totaling 154 lines in an unusual arrangement (Pritchard 1973a:558-561).

The information in the translation gave interesting insights to the food and agriculture of the Iron Age II period. Portions of the translations are found in the section of this dissertation under, Food Preparation, 4.11.7.

4.5.2.4 Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE) Kurkh Stele

Qarqar is the site on the central Orontes River in Syria which was the scene of a famous battle fought between Shalmaneser III and an anti-Assyrian coalition in 853 BCE. The site has been identified with Qerqur in the village of Qarqar. Though the battle is not mentioned in the OT, it is important because it sheds light on the foreign policy of Ahab of Israel and provides our earliest known synchronism with Assyrian documents. The most accurate text source of information regarding this battle was found on a monolith inscription discovered at Kurkh on the Tigris River in south-eastern Turkey in 1861.

The following is a commentary on the Biblical Books of 1 and 2 Kings written by G. Rawlinson after he translated and published a portion of the inscription found on the Kurkh Stele. This commentary by G. Rawlinson was presented in a book written by T. C. Mitchell.

According to this monolith inscription (from Kurkh) Shalmaneser III claims to have fought a battle at Qarqar against a coalition of Aramean kings in his sixth year (the year of the eponym Daian-Ashur). Included among the kings is a certain A-ha-ab-bu of Sir-'i-la-a-a, who is alleged to have supplied two-thousand chariots and ten-thousand foot soldiers. In the eighteenth year of his reign he claimed to have received tribute from Jehu. Chronological considerations render it extremely doubtful whether this person thus designated could have been the son of Omri. Jehu, however, seems certain to have come within the sphere of Shalmaneser's influence, and to have been induced to send him presents, which Shalmaneser regarded as a tribute.

In order to place the battle of Qarqar within the reign of Ahab, the chronology of the kings of Israel would have to be shortened by twenty-one years, or the chronology of the Assyrian kings would have to be moved back twenty-one years. Nevertheless, even if this were done Shalmaneser's claim of receiving tribute from Jehu in his eighteenth year would place that event four years before Jehu began to reign. Furthermore, Shalmaneser claims Hadadezer perished some time after his fourteenth year and was succeeded by Hazael as king of Syria; yet scripture says that Hazael killed Hadadezer during the reign of Jehoram of Israel. (2 Kings 8:13-15; 25-29) Thus, if Shalmaneser's fourteenth year is aligned with the last year of Jehoram, the battle of Qarqar still falls some five years short of the last year of Ahab. The only suitable time for Ahab to have been willing to align himself with his old enemy would have been during the last three years of his rule, which was just after he defeated Hadadezer in battle; for then there was a brief period of peace between them within a space of three years. (1 Kings 22:1) This would have required Ahab to march his forces to Qarqar, suffer a defeat with Hadadezer, and return and prepare to engage Hadadezer in the battle at Ramoth-Gilead with Jehoshaphat, all within that brief space of less than three years. As stated

earlier, this would place the tribute of Jehu at least five years before he became king. It would also mean that Hazael would have killed Hadadezer in the last year of Jehoshaphat. This would then mean that all of the events described in 1 Kings 22:51 - 2 Kings 7:20 and 8:7 - 15 would have occurred before the death of Jehoshaphat. While this does not appear to be impossible it would require moving the tribute of Jehu to a time at least seven years before he received the word from Elisha that he would be king(2 Kings 8:25 - 9:10). What reason would Jehu send tribute to the king of Assyria while he was still a captain without knowledge that he would be king? Unless Elijah had informed Jehu of God's plan before he was anointed by Elisha. The scriptures make no mention of it.

If this highly unlikely scenario were true then the reign of Shalmaneser III would have to be shifted back some twenty-three years, and this would greatly disturb the eponym lists, and also lengthen the reigns of at least the next three Assyrian kings. It is more probable that Ahab was not at Qarqar, and that Shalmaneser was boasting in his annals about conquests and expeditions that yielded far less than what he claimed. This was not an unknown practice among Assyrian kings, and neither was it unheard of for a king to claim victories that occurred in the reigns of his predecessors.

Nevertheless, several things are certain about Shalmaneser's claims: (1) Ahab never had two-thousand chariots. (2) During the three years of peace between Ahab and Hadadezer, Ahab was waiting for Hadadezer to return several cities to him according to their agreement, which was made after Ahab had defeated Hadadezer. (3) Shalmaneser mentions there were soldiers from Ba'sa. Ba'sa sounds like the name of an early king of Israel. He also wrote about a man who was the son of Ruhubi from Ammon. Ruhubi sounds like Reuben, the son of Jacob. Furthermore, Ammon had always fought against Israel and was unlikely to have offered military aid. (Mitchell 1988:44-45).

4.5.2.5 Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE)

This Obelisk records the exploits of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE). It was discovered by Sir

Austen Henry Layard, in 1846 while he was excavating at ancient Nimrud. It is composed of black alabaster and originally it stood 2.02 m in height. The original is on display at the British Museum in London, as number BM 18885 (Reade 1986:44-45). The obelisk has four sides, each with five picture panels interspersed with cuneiform inscriptions. There is also cuneiform above and below each set of pictures. The inscriptions record the annals of thirty-two years of Shalmaneser's III reign. Most of the illustrations recorded the various tributes brought to Shalmaneser III by various vassal kings. See Figure 4.5-1.

The translation of the inscription was one of the first achievements of Assyrian decipherment, and was made by Sir. H. Rawlinson. Shortly afterward, in 1851, Dr. Edward Hincks succeeded in reading the name of Jehu in it. M. Oppert translated the inscription in his "Histoire des Empires de Chaldee et d'Assyrie," and M. Menant has given another rendering of it in his "Annales des Rois d'Assyrie (1874). A copy of the text is in Layard's "Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Character" 1851. A good English translation of the inscription was achieved through the work of Rev. A. H. Sayce. His translation can be found in his book titled; "Babylonian and Assyrian Literature" (Sayce 1996:238).

One side of the obelisk shows Israelite tribute. As described above, each of the four sides has writing above and below five picture panels.

The top of this panel shows Sua, the Gilzanite, bringing tribute to Shalmaneser III, who is standing to the left, armed with a bow and arrows and accompanied by an attendant and soldier. Above this scene are the winged sun-disc, divine symbol of the god Assur, king of all of the great gods, and the eight-pointed star, divine symbol of

Enlil, creator and father of the gods. The second panel, which is possibly the most significant, depicts Shalmaneser receiving tribute from Jehu, king of Israel, who is prostrate before the king. Shalmaneser holds a bowl in his raised hand and is sheltered by a parasol held by an attendant.

Musri, illustrated on the third panel, consists entirely of animals led or driven by attendants dressed in knee-length garments. The fourth panel illustrates two lions hunting a stag in a forest, perhaps reminiscent of the countries which Shalmaneser has conquered. The bottom panel records the tribute, brought forth by porters wearing pointed caps, of Karparunda of Hattina (Sayce 1996:239-249).

Translations of the inscriptions describing each scene follow.

- I. Tribute of Sua, the Gilzanite. Silver, gold, lead, copper vessels, staves (staffs) for the hand of the king, horses, camels, whose backs are doubled, I received from him.
- II. Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri. Silver, gold, a golden saplu (bowl), a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden goblets, pitchers of gold, tin, staves (staffs) for the hand of the king, puruhtu (javelins?), I received from him.
- III. Tribute of the land of Musri. Camels whose backs are doubled, a river ox (hippopotamus), a sakea (rhinoceros), a susu (antelope), elephants, bazîtu (and) uqupu (monkeys), I received from him.
- IV. Tribute of Marduk-apal-usur of Suhi. Silver, gold, pitchers of gold, ivory, javelins, buia, brightly colored and linen garments, I received from him.
- V. Tribute of Karparunda of Hattina. Silver, gold, lead, copper, copper vessels, ivory, cypress (timbers), I received from him.

The Black Obelisk became famous when it was realized that it made reference to Jehu, King of Israel (2 Kings

19.16; 2 Kings 9-10). A descendant of Shalmaneser, Shalmaneser V, is mentioned in 2 Kings 17:3 and 18:9. The Black Obelisk also mentions King Hazael of Damascus who appears in the Old Testament (2 Kings 8:28f; 9:14f) (Mitchell 1988:46-49). See Figure 4.5-2.

4.5.2.6 Shalmaneser III and The Bronze Balawat Gates from Balawat, Iraq

These gates dated to Shalmaneser III reign and were part of the Ishtar Temple uncovered at Balawat, Iraq. The first band on the gate registering from right to left to right revealed the chariots of Shalmaneser III as they moved across mountain terrain. Having arrived at Lake Urmia, two harpist and three priests in high hats along with the king himself lead cattle and sheep to a sacrifice. Nearby a stele of the king has been erected near the sacred standards as Assyrian soldiers throw meat to a strange half dog, half fish spiritual deity.

It is interesting to note that in the British Museum is another Assyrian bas-relief that showed a deity in a fish robe from Nimrud; 9th century BCE. This figure as well as the one described above is often identified as the Philistine god Dagon on the grounds of a presumed derivation from Hebrew "dag," meaning "fish". It appears he was possibly associated with Ea (Enki), the god of sweet waters, who is depicted with streams containing fish flowing from his shoulder. The Dagon of the Philistines was in all probability the Syrian and north Mesopotamian god Dagan who had weather and grain attributes. The Hebrew word "dagan," for "grain" and "corn," as well as the Canaanite language, reflects this fact (Mitchell 1988:50).

The lower half of the first band depicts the Assyrian army advancing from a circular camp and attacking the town of Sugunia. The enemy is shooting back, but their town is already on fire and bodies are draped over the battlements. Bound prisoners are also led out of the town after its capture.

The second band's upper register shows tribute being received from the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon. The Phoenician king and queen watch as tribute is carried from the boats in the form of bales, cauldrons and trays of jewelry. It is received by Shalmaneser who is accompanied by courtiers and attendants. Assyrian war chariots parade in a procession behind the king.

In the second band's lower register the Assyrians attack the town of Hazuzu, in Syria. They slaughter all defenders and lead a trail of bound prisoners past the watching eyes of Shalmaneser (Reade 1996:20-23 and 44).

4.5.2.7 Tiglath-pileser III (Pul) (747-727 BCE) Astartu Relief

The Astartu Relief of Tiglath-pileser is a carved stone relief found at Nimrud and is from the 8th century BCE. The relief shows Tiglath-pileser III in his chariot and above him is a fortified city, on a mound or tell. Assyrian soldiers are shown driving out prisoners and herds. The band of cuneiform across the middle gives part of the text of Tiglath-pileser's Annals and has no direct relation to the reliefs, but above the city is inscribed the name, "as-tar-tu," which gives the name of the defeated city. This has been identified as the Old Testament Ashtaroth in northern Transjordan (Deut. 1:14; Josh.9:10) a

territory which was part of Aram in the period of the Divided Monarchy. The defeat depicted in this relief probably took place during one of the western campaigns of Tiglath-pileser which he conducted in his sixth, eleventh, eighteenth and twenty-first years. The city is shown on a typical tell (Mitchell 1998:52).

A portion of what Rawlinson recorded from his translation of the Astartu Relief was:

Pul, who, taking advantage of Assyria's weakness under Asshur-daydan III seems to have established a dominion over the Euphrates valley and Western Mesopotamia, from which he proceeded to carry his arms into Syria and Palestine.

In a footnote he adds,

In Berosus he was represented as "Chaldaorum rex." It is possible that he was one of the rebel chiefs against whom Asshur-dayan II had to contend, that his authority was established in Western Mesopotamia, and that he took the title of "king of Assyria.

(Mitchell 1998:52).

4.5.2.8 Relief of Sargon II (722-705 BCE)

Sargon succeeded his brother Shalmaneser V as king of Assyria in 721 BCE. In his annals Sargon appears to claim that he conquered Samaria at the beginning of his reign. But it is more likely that it was Shalmaneser V to whom this conquest is to be credited. His invasion and siege are referred to in 2 Kings 17:5-6; 18:9. In the case of Samaria, the "king of Assyria," probably Shalmaneser V, is said to have deported Israelites to Syria (river Habur), western Iran (Media) and probably north east Mesopotamia (Halahhu) (2 Kings 17:6).

Sargon's apparent reference in his annals to the conquest of Samaria may refer to a campaign which he conducted to the west in 720 BCE. He claims that he deported 27,280 Israelites to Assyria, and brought in people from other conquered territories to replace them. The Old Testament states that these new settlers, who included some from Cuthah in Babylonia, set up images of their own gods (2 King 17:30-31).

The relief of Sargon II was found in his palace at Khorsabad, ancient Dur Sharrukin, of the 8th century BCE and is presently on display at the London Museum. It shows him holding a wand and facing one of his officials (Mitchell 1988:53).

4.5.2.9 Sennacherib (704-681 BCE): Taylor Prism; Oriental Institute Prism; and Lachish Reliefs from Nineveh.

Although this Assyrian king came after the time period of which this dissertation is being written, he played an important role in what happened to the people of Israel/Judah. The following is a brief summary of the primary inscriptions related to the archaeological sources of Sennacherib that elucidates the history of northern kingdom and neighboring lands in relationship to the exile. These inscriptions also give important details graphically about the material culture of the Iron II Age period as it relates to Israel, Judah and neighboring lands.

The annals of Sennacherib are found in two inscriptions, the Taylor Prism and the Oriental Institute Prism. Both are alike in content and appearance. They are six-sided hexagonal prisms of baked clay about 15 inches high.

The Taylor Prism is dated to 691 BCE. Details about its discovery are unknown, but it is believed to have been found in the rubble of Sennacherib's palace at ancient Nineveh. It came into the possession of Colonel James Taylor, a British diplomat, at Mosul, Iraq in 1830 and it was acquired by the British Museum in 1855.

The Oriental Institute Prism was acquired by the University of Chicago in 1920. It dates to 691 BCE

Both of these prisms contain accounts of all eight of the campaigns that Sennacherib conducted between 705 BCE and 694 BCE in which he claims victory. The third campaign is very interesting since it was directed against Judah and King Hezekiah. Sennacherib boasts that he shut up "Hezekiah the Judahite" within Jerusalem his own royal city "like a caged bird." In the Bible, Sennacherib's invasions of Judah are recorded in 2 Kings 18:13 to 19:8; Isaiah 36:1-37:8; 2 Chronicles 32:1-22).

Related to King Hezekiah's efforts to stop Sennacherib from taking Jerusalem was his effort to protect the city through the building of a water tunnel. The primarily details about Hezekiah's tunnel are found in chapter 5 of this dissertation under the site of Jerusalem.

Another source of information about Sennacherib came from his palace at Nineveh. The walls showed carved reliefs of his capture of the city of Lachish in Judah. The reliefs were taken from the site in 1853 and remain on display in the British Museum. One relief shows what the Assyrian camp was like. It has an oval wall, with defensive towers at intervals. In examples of other Assyrian camps, like what was shown on the Balawat bronzes, the camps were round or rectangular. There were two

pavilions and five open tents. Inside the tents, it showed men making a bed, setting a table, grinding flour, cooking, and gossiping over a drink. One corner of the camp was occupied by a pair of chariots, with a standard mounted in each of them; these are described as the chariots of the gods, sometimes seen charging into battle. On this occasion two priests in tall hats are performing a ceremony, in front of them there is an incense-burner higher than the priest, and a sacrificial leg of meat on an altar. To the left the relief shows more of Sennacherib's army along with more chariots and horses (Reade 1986:49).

Other scenes included Sennacherib's artillery in action. Slingers are stationed at the rear with archers closer to the front. The Assyrians are wearing pointed helmets, and various auxiliaries. At the front, bottom right, are shock troopers. The attack is also demonstrated with the use of siege-engines. The Assyrians advance up newly constructed ramps that were roughly surfaced with planks. Some of the soldiers work in pairs, one shooting arrows while his companion covers them both with a heavy shield. The siege-engines have protective leather coverings, fastened with toggles. A fireman inside of the engine ladles out water to prevent the siege-engine from being ignited by the flaming torches being thrown at it. Giant spears jutting out from inside of the siege-engines were used to prod at the enemy's fortification as the spears and crushes portions of walls. There is a platform projecting from the top of the battlements with a ladder-like wooden framework holding a row of round shields. This structure is shown tumbling down; elsewhere it brings a pair of chariots with it. The people of Lachish are shown

defending themselves with arrows, stones, and a hail of blazing torches(Reade 1986:47 & 50).

After the fall of Lachish, the Assyrians are portrayed carrying away a throne, chariot, and other items from the palace of the governor of Lachish. A procession of figures moves through a rocky landscape studded with vines, figs, olive tree, and orchards near the town. Some of the prisoners are treated relatively well, and the prediction is they would be resettled in Assyria. Sennacherib records, that as a result of this campaign he deported 200,150 people. High officials, who are regarded as being responsible for the rebellion against the king are being tortured and executed (Reade 1986:48). Another relief shows a family from Lachish, taking their possessions with them into exile and along with three prisoners (Reade 1986:50).

Another scene showed Sennacherib sitting on a throne while the booty of Lachish passed before him. His officers stand in front of him, followed by prisoners on their knees. The royal pavilion, behind the throne, consists of a screen attached to poles, with supporting guy-ropes, and there are two covered areas inside; the central part must have been open, since some sculpture show the heads of women peering out at him. The royal party is accompanied by a squadron of cavalry and below the pavilion is the king's chariot, led by grooms with tasseled quivers and followed by the bearer of Sennacherib's parasol (Reade 1986:49). Another relief shows Sennacherib sitting on his throne grasping his bow in his left hand and holding up some arrows in the right. This is,

A classic gesture of Assyrian kings in triumph. His throne is elaborately decorated with figures of protective genies, their arms raised as if supporting

a heavy weight; there is also a handsome footstool. The crown-prince stands in front of Sennacherib and behind are attendants, with napkins and fly-whisks. The king's face has been mutilated showing that it probably has been defaced by an enemy another time (Reade 1986:51).

Two other reliefs show three prisoners carrying lyres; each playing the strings with a plectrum. Another section portrays soldiers in the bodyguard of Sennacherib carrying bow and arrows, spears, and shields (Reade 1986:52).

4.5.3 Moabite Inscriptions

4.5.3.1 Moabite Stone(Mesha Stele)

This is a basalt stone, bearing an inscription by King Mesha, which was discovered at ancient Dhiban, by Father Klein, a German missionary from Jerusalem, in 1868. Dhiban is the site of biblical Dibon (Numbers 21:30) and is located about 20 miles south of Amman and about 12 miles east of the Dead Sea. Dibon was the royal city of the kingdom of Moab. It was also the northern administrative seat of Mesha, the ninth-century BCE Moabite king who commissioned the inscription to commemorate his achievements.

When set upright, the stone is about 3 1/2 feet high, 27 inches across at its widest point, and almost 14 inches thick. It consisted of thirty-four lines, written in Hebrew-Phoenician characters. When German and French scholars found out about the inscription, competition developed over the purchase of it from the local Bedouin people. The competition had a disastrous consequence. The

suspicious Bedouins set the stone in a fire. They then broke it into pieces by throwing water onto the hot stone. The resulting fragments were distributed to local tribal leaders who kept them as talismans to ensure the fertility of the soil. Fortunately, Clermont-Ganneau, a French scholar, had taken steps prior to this catastrophe to have a 'squeeze' or image made of the writing.

The inscription was to become one of the most valuable pieces ever found of linguistic importance. The stone dated to the second half of the ninth century BCE. By that time the scripts and languages of the various Iron Age states of Syria and Canaan had begun to develop the regional or national features that would distinguish them from their parent scripts and languages and from each other. Thus the forms of the letters with which the Moabite stone is written are distinct from those found in the emerging Phoenician and Aramaic scripts. At the time there seemed to be no discernible difference between Moabite and Hebrew script. The language of the Moabite stone is uniquely Moabite. It has a close affinity with the Hebrew of neighboring Judah. It also differs from Judahite Hebrew in important respects, and it diverges significantly from Phoenician, Aramaic and Ammonite.

The stone was set up by Mesha as a record and memorial of his victories. Three significant items that were recorded on the stone were: (1) Mesha's wars with Omri, (2) Mesha's 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 (McCarter 1996:90-91). See Figure 4.5-3.

The translation of the Moabite Stone is as follows:

I am Mesha, son of Kemoshmelek, the king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father was king over Moab for thirty years, and I became king after my father. And I made this high place for Kemosh in Qarhar . . . because of the deliverance of Mesha, and because he has saved me from all the kings and because he caused me to see [my desire] upon all who hated me. Omri, king of Israel -- he oppressed Moab many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land.

And his son succeeded him, and he also said I will oppress Moab. In my day he spoke according to this word, but I saw my desire upon him and upon his house, and Israel utterly perished forever.

Now Omri had possessed all the land of Medeba and dwelt in it his days and half the days of his son, forty years, but Chemosh restored it in my day. And I built Baal-meon and I made in it the reservoir and I built Kiryathaim. And the men of Gad had dwelt in the land of Ataroth from of old and the king of Israel had built for himself Ataroth. And I fought against the city and took it, and I slew all the people of the city, a sight pleasing to Chemosh and to Moab.

And I brought back from there the altar-hearth of Duda and I dragged it before Chemosh in Kiryoth. And I caused to dwell in it the men of Sharon and the men of Meharoth (?).

And Chemosh said to me: "Go take Nebo against Israel"; and I went by night and fought against it from break of dawn till noon, and I took it and slew all, seven thousand men, boys (?), and women, and girls, for I had devoted it to Ashtar-Chemosh.

And I took from there the altar-hearths of Yahweh, and I dragged them before Chemosh. And the king of Israel built Jahaz and dwelt in it while he fought with me and Chemosh drove him out from before me. And I took from Moab two hundred men, all its chiefs, and I led them against Jahaz and took it to add unto Dibon.

And I built Qarhar (?), the wall of the forests and the wall of the hill; and I built its gates and I built its towers, and I built the king's house, and I made the sluices (?) for the reservoir of water in the midst of the city.

And there was no cistern in the midst of the city, in Qarhar (?); and I said to all the people: 'Make you each a cistern in his house;' and I cut the cuttings for Qarhar (?) with the help of the prisoners of Israel. I built Aroer and I made the highway by the Arnon. And I built Beth-bamoth, for it had been destroyed. And I built Bezer, for it was in ruins....(Chi) of Dibon were fifty, for all Dibon was obedient. And I ruled. And I ruled a hundred....in the cities which I had added to the land. And I built [Mede]ba and Beth-diblathan. And [as for] Beth-baalmeon, there I placed sheep-raisers....sheep of the land... And [as for] Horonaim there dwelt in it and Chemosh said unto me: "Go down, fight against Horonaim, "and I went down and Chemosh in my day, and from there. and I"(Barton 1937:460-461).

The above translation of the Moabite gives valuable insights into the elucidating of the history of the Northern Kingdom and neighboring lands. The writer of this dissertation found the following information to be important in evaluating this subject.

The king immediately identified himself as a Dibonite and gave his heritage. He explained his purpose in the erection of the stele was the construction of a "high place" or local shrine to Chemosh, the national god of Moab, in Qarhoh. This has given identity to Qarhoh as a sacred precinct of Dibon.

Modern Dhiban consists of two mounds situated north and south of each other. The southern mound has not been excavated. The excavation of the northern mound produced material dating to the Iron II period. One area on the summit of the mound produced a Moabite palace complex that dated to the ninth century BCE, the time of King Mesha. It was in this area that the stone was found. (McCarter 1996:91).

King Mesha also commemorated his achievements. One was his success at settling an ongoing border dispute between Moab and Israel. This is expressed in lines 4-9 where he mentions how he "triumphed" over the house of Israel. He particularly mentioned the region around Madeba.

Another section mentioned, "...now the men of Gad had lived in the land of Ataroth since time immemorial... but I fought against the city and took it as an appeasement for Chemosh and Moab." In Joshua 13:8-32, the region of Dibon was the territory claimed by the Israelite tribes of Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh. In Numbers 32:34, it says, "the sons of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth." Mesha's account is consistent with this. As mentioned above, the conflict between Moab and Israel in this period is also reported in the Bible in 2 Kings 3:4-5. This account is as follows, "Mesha, the king of Moab, was a sheep-breeder, and he used to bring the king of Israel the wool of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams. But when Ahab died the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."

These two sources may refer to the same historical situation, but their points of view are obviously at variance and there is a discrepancy on one essential point. Both refer to a time during the reign of Mesha when Moab was subject to Israel. The Moabite stone refers to a time when the king of Israel "oppressed Moab" and the 2 Kings passage describes a regular payment of tribute in the form of wool. The two sources also agree that Moab threw off the Israelite yoke during the reign of Mesha. The discrepancy lies in the fact that in the Bible, Mesha's revolt coincides with the death of Ahab, so that the Israelite king who unsuccessfully tries to reassert his

authority over Mesha is Ahab's son, Jehoram. Mesha's own account, however, implies that "Omri's son" (he never calls Ahab by name) was still on the throne at the time of the revolt.

It may be that information contained in the Moabite stone's final lines, which were not fully restored after the monument was shattered, could have shed light on this discrepancy. In the biblical account, Jehoram enlists the aid of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, in his incursion against Moab. Andre' Lemaire of the University of Paris (Sorbonne) has recently made a strong case for seeing Judah involved in a later episode in the Moabite stone (Lemaire 1994:31). This episode refers to a battle for Hauronen, a town east or southeast of the Dead Sea. Unlike the places mentioned earlier in the inscription, Hauronen lies south of the Arnon river, the modern Wadi Mujib, about three miles south of Dhiban. Lemaire proposes that Judah is referred to in line 31 of Mesha's inscription under the designation "House of David," exactly as in the Tel Dan stela. If Lemaire is correct, the pertinent passage should be read, "As for Hauronen, the House of David lived there. . . And Chemosh said to me, 'Go down (and) fight against Hauronen. So I went down and (fo)ught against the city and took it, and Chemosh resided there in my days..."

Further study of the final section of the inscription may refine our understanding of the exact historical situation reflected in Mesha's inscription. At this point, it seems safest to assume that it looks back at the events of the mid-ninth century from a time not too long after the death of Ahab or 840 BCE (McCarter 1996:92). The writer of this dissertation found that the above comments made by Mc

Carter parallel his evaluation of the importance of the Moab Stone. It is an archaeological source that definitely helps to elucidate the history of the northern kingdom and Moab during the period of interest.

4.5.4 Aramaic Inscriptions

4.5.4.1 Introduction to Aramaic Inscriptions

The background on Aramaic writing was briefly discussed under the introduction to the chapter on Literacy and Inscriptions.

Several important inscriptions, which will be discussed in this section, were found in the Aramaic language. The inscriptions help us to elucidate the role that the Aramean (Syrian) kings played in the history of the northern kingdom and neighboring lands from 876-721 BCE

These Aramean (Syrian) kings included:

Benhadad I (900-860 BCE)

Benhadad II (860-841 BCE)

Hazael (841-806 BCE)

Benhadad III (806-770 BCE) and

Rezin (750-732 BCE)

(Walton 1978:65).

4.5.4.2 Tel Dan Stele

Tel Dan is located in the fertile valley of Upper Galilee at one of the principal sources of the Jordan. Excavations of the site have been continuous since 1966. For more information about the excavation of Dan see chapter 5.

Three stele fragments were found when excavators were clearing debris left from the eighth-century BCE

destruction of Dan by the Assyrian army under Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BCE). Tiglath-pileser is believed to have conquered Dan during his second western campaign (734-732 BCE), which was directed against an anti-Assyrian coalition led by Rezin of Damascus, whose allies included Pekah of Israel. The Galilean part of this campaign is reported in 2 Kings 15:29, though Dan is not mentioned there by name. Beneath the destruction rubble at Dan the excavators found a ninth-century BCE gate, which was located outside of the main city gate (McCarter 1996:86).

On July 21, 1993, Gila Gook, the superintendent of the excavation team, detected the largest of the stele fragments (fragment A) in a wall located east of the gate. The wall, in which the inscribed basalt slab was found, had been reused as a simple building block, lay beneath the rubble of the eight-century destruction. This made the excavation team alert to the possibilities of finding more fragments. About 11 months later, they succeeded in recovering two smaller pieces, one (B1) from rubble at a point about 43 feet northeast of the place where fragment (A) was found, and the other (B2) from the base of another wall about 26 feet farther north (McCarter 1996: 86-87).

These shattered pieces of basalt constitute the remains of a large monument on which an Old Aramaic inscription of the mid-ninth century BCE was expertly carved. After several very fragmentary lines, in which the king who speaks in the inscription mentions "my father" and "warfare," we come to lines 3-5, which contain only small breaks. These sections read as follows: "...and my father lay down and went to his fathers, and the king of I[s]rael came forth into my father's land. [Then] Hadad caused m[e]

to become king. As for me, Hadad went before me [,and] I went out from..." After this the text becomes increasingly fragmentary, but it is clear that the speaker boasts of having defeated a large enemy force, including chariots and cavalry. At this point there are references to "[Jeho] ram son of [Ahab], king of Israel," and "[Ahaz]iah son of [Jehoram, king of the House of David." It is possible that the text alludes to the death of one or both of these kings and it is also possible that the speaker is claiming to have slain one or both of them. But neither of these possibilities is certain (McCarter 1996:87-88).

Who left this stele at Tel Dan? His name is not preserved, but we know that he was an Aramean ruler, since he speaks of having been made king by the Aramean god Hadad. Quite possibly he was a king of Damascus, which was the chief Aramean power in the vicinity of Dan at that time. The city of Damascus is located about 40 miles northeast of Dan at the other end of Mt. Hermon. It had been ascendant in southern Syria since the time of Solomon, when a certain Rezon son of Elyada seized power there after rebelling against David's old adversary, Hadadezer of Zobah (1 Kings 11:23-24). Under Rezon and his successors, Damascus quickly became the most powerful state in the region and probably the most powerful anywhere in the Levant. In 1 Kings 15:18 we are informed of a king of Damascus named Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon son of Hezion, who seems to have come to the throne shortly after 900 BCE and was, in any case, a contemporary of Baasah of Israel and Asa of Judah. Intervening in support of Asa in war against Baasha, this Ben-hadad attacked several Israelite cities, including Dan (1 Kings 15:20). When only fragment

(A) of the Tel Dan inscription was known, many scholars thought that it might have been left after this attack. Fragment (B2), however, preserves portions of the names of Jehoram and Ahaziah, the kings of Israel and Judah who reigned later, in the mid-ninth century. Both of these kings died during the uprising of Jehu, a usurper who seized the throne of Israel. Jehu's revolt took place no earlier than about 842 BCE and perhaps a few years later. The conclusion is that the Tel Dan stela must be attributed to a later king of Damascus than Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon and, more specifically, to a king who was on the throne in the late 840's BCE (Mc,Carter 1996:87).

The next king of Damascus known to us was called Hadadezer, a contemporary of Ahab of Israel. Both Hadadezer and Ahab were leading members of the anti-Assyrian coalition that resisted Shalmaneser II in his attempt to subdue Hamath, the principal Syrian state north of Damascus, and its king Irhulent. Shalmaneser's own records, including his Black Monolith, provide considerable detail about his war against this coalition. The high point of which was the battle fought in his sixth year (853 BCE) at Qarqar (see Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser under Assyrian inscription, chapter 4.5). Though Shalmaneser was able to destroy Qarqar, the strength of this coalition seems to have dissuaded him from pushing farther south. In any case, he was obliged to fight the coalition again in his 10th, 11th and 14th years (849,848, and 845 BCE). The Assyrian accounts of these battles made it clear that Hadadezer was the principal leader of the anti-Assyrian resistance.

Hadadezer is mentioned for the last time in the Assyrian annals in connection with Shalmaneser's 14th year (845 BCE). In the records of year 18 (841 BCE) Damascus has a new king, Hazael. One Assyrian text calls Hazael, "the son of nobody who seized the throne" that is, a usurper. This corresponds to the account in 2 Kings 8:7-15, which presents Hazael as a court official in Damascus who stages an overthrow by smothering the king with his own bedclothes and seizing power.

In the biblical scripture, the assassinated king is called "Ben-hadad," and scholars disagree over his identity. Some think Ben-hadad was the name of Hadadezer's son and successor. Others think Ben-hadad was another name for Hadadezer himself. This is possible since the name Ben-hadad (Bir Hadad in its original Aramaic form) means "Son of Hadad" which is the son of the Aramean god Hadad. It might have been a throne name, identifying the king. His personal name was something else. It was, in any case, the name of a number of Aramean kings, including the Damascene contemporary of Baasha and Asa and the king who dedicated a stele to the Tyrian god Melqart (see Melqart Stela) (Mc,Carter 1996:89). This information allows us to see that there could be several candidates for the king of Damascus who left the stela at Tel Dan. The most likely seems to be Hazael, since the rebellion he staged in Damascus preceded Jehu's overthrow in Israel by at least a year or two. If the stela contains a reference to the death of Jehoram and Ahaziah, those deaths must be attributed to Hazael, since he was on the throne when they died. If on the other hand, these kings are mentioned in reference to events earlier in their reigns, then we must

consider this possibility is also supported by the references at the beginning of the inscription to "my father" and "my father's land." This kind of language is common in inscriptions in which a king looks back on the reign of his father, usually for the purpose of stressing the improved situation in his own time. But it would be surprising for Hazael, a usurper and a "son of nobody" to reminisce about his predecessor. Hazael seems the most likely candidate. If this stela is his, we must assume it was left at Dan after the events alluded to in 2 Kings 8:28-29. There we are told that King Jehoram of Israel was wounded in a battle against Hazael's troops at Ramoth-gilead, an Israelite outpost on the Transjordanian plateau that seems to have been a site of chronic border conflict between Samaria and Damascus in this period (1 Kings 22:3). Jehoram was taken to Jezreel (see Jezreel under sites), he was joined there by King Ahaziah of Judah, who had fought alongside him at Ramoth-gilead. It was at Jezreel that Jehu trapped the two kings, killing Jehoram and wounding Ahaziah, who died later at Megiddo (2 Kings 9:19-29). This Tel Dan stela may very possibly be providing direct evidence of these events (McCarter 1996: 89).

4.5.4.3 The Melqart Stele of Bar-hadad (Ben-Hadad)

This monument was discovered in a village about 5 miles North of Aleppo in northern Syria in 1940. The text of the inscription was published in 1941 by Maurice Dunand. How the stele arrived at the site is unknown, although there were Roman ruins in the area. The Stele is dated by epigraphy to about 870 BCE. It has a carved representation of Melqart, the god of the Phoenician city of Tyre (McCarter 1996:93). Five lines of the inscriptions are:

"The monument which Bar-hada, son of Tabrimon, king of Aram, erected for his lord Milqart, which he vowed to him, and he listened to his voice." This stele is the earliest inscribed monument recovered to date which bears the name of an Aramean ruler, namely Benhadad I. The wording on the stele describing him is identical with that in 1 Kings 15:18.

What is particularly valuable about this monument is it supplies the extra biblical historical material recovered to date from Syria which describes the century and a half of warfare between the Damascus regime and the northern kingdom of Israel. It does provide general confirmation of the list of Damascene rulers in 1 Kings 15:18. The Stele can be seen in the Aleppo Museum in Syria.

As Aramaic spread, the alphabet quickly took root in Assyria and Babylonia, to the disadvantage of the cuneiform script (Hanson 2002:1-5).

4.5.4.4 Zakir Stele

The Zakir Stele is the inscription of Zakir, king of Hamath and Lu'ash. The complete stele has not survived. Originally it is estimated to have been some 210 cm. in height. All that remains are four broken pieces of the lower half of the stele, fortunately preserving the bulk of the text of the inscription, but at places badly defaced. There are still visible the limbs of the weather-god 'Ilwer, to whom the stele was dedicated.

The stele was found in 1907, in Afis, twenty-five miles southwest of Aleppo, by H. Pognon, for many years the French consul in Aleppo. Pognon published the text of the inscription in 1907-08 along with other inscriptions in

Assyrian, Pehlevi, Hebrew and Syriac. The Zakir inscription is in Aramaic. Interestingly enough, the place of the discovery was kept a close secret till several years afterwards. Its eventual disclosure proved to be important, since the name Aphis (Aphek) occurs in the text, and the modern city of Afis is situated in the area where the events recorded in the inscription took place.

The stele commemorates a victory of Zakir over Ben-hadad (in its Aramaic form Bar-hadad), son of Hazael, king of Syria, and his allies, at Hazrak, the Assyrian Hatarikka and the Hadrach of Zech. 9:1 where it is mentioned along with Hamath (verse 2) as a city of some importance on the northern boundaries of Syria. Bar-hadad, son of Hazael, supplies our most important clue for the period and dating of the inscription. He can only be the Ben-hadad, son of Hazel, mentioned in 2 Kings 13:24, the contemporary of Joash (Jehoash) of Israel and the prophet Elisha. The events commemorated in the stele must, therefore, have been contemporaneous with the events of 2 Kings 13. A date of 755 BCE is generally accepted (Pritchard 1973a: 219-220).

TEXT OF ZAKIR STELE

I am, Zakir, king of Hamat and Lu'ash. A humble man I am. Be'elshamayn [helped me?] and stood by me. Be'elshamayn made king over Hatarikk (Hadrach). Bar-hadad, the son of Hazael, king of Aram, united [seven of] a group of ten kings against me: Barhadad and his army; Bargush and his army; the king of Cilicia and his army] the king of 'Umq and his army; the king of Gargum and his army; the king of Sam'al and his army; the king of Milidh and his army. [All these kings whom Barhadad united against me] were seven kings and their armies. All these kings laid siege to Hatarikka. They made a wall higher than the wall of Hatarikka. They made a mote deeper than its moat. But I lifted up my hand to Be'elshamayn, and

Be'elshamayn heard me. Be'elshamayn [spoke] to me through seers and through diviners. Be'elshamayn [said to me]: Do not fear, for I made you king, and I shall stand by you and deliver you from all [these kings who] set up a siege against you. [Be'elshamayn] said to me: [I shall destroy] all these kings who set up [a siege against you and made this moat]and this wall which ...

[...] charioteer and horseman [...] its king in its midst [...]. I [enlarged] Hatarikka and added [to it] the entire district of [...] and I made him ki[ng ...] all these strongholds every where within the bor[ders].

I built houses for the gods everywhere in my country. I built [...] and Apish [...] and the house of [...].

I set up this stela before Ilu-Wer, and I wrote upon it my achievements [...]. Whoever shall remove (this record of) the achievements of Zakir, king of Hamat and Lu'ath, from this stela and whoever shall remove this stela from before Ilu-Wer and banish it from its [place] or whomever shall stretch forth his hand [to ...], [may] Be'elshamayn and I [Ilu-Wer and ...] and Shamash and Sahr [and ...] and the Gods of Heaven [and the Gods] of Earth and Be'el-'[... deprive him of h]ead and [...] his root and [..., and may] the name of Zakir and the name of [his house endure forever]! Interpretation of the Zakir stele and commentary on the text (Pritchard 1973a:219-220).

In the inscription no reference is given to Zakir's ancestors. It appears Zakir was probably a usurper or a puppet king of the Assyrian empire. Where was his kingdom of Hamath and Lu'as? Hamath is familiar from the OT as an important city on the northernmost frontiers of Syria. Its king, Urhuleni, is mentioned in the Nimrod obelisk as one of the conquered kings in the great Assyrian victory at Qarqar on the Orontes River in 854 BCE.

Hazrak or Hadrach, is also known both from the O.T. (Zach. 9:1) and Assyrian sources. It was situated between Arpah and Hamath; the most likely site is the great tel some thirteen miles north east of Afis. The main problem of

the stele has been the identification of Lu'ash. Among the alternatives proposed the best seems to be the equation of Lu'ash with the land of Nuhasse of the Amarna letter, a territory lying between Aleppo and Hamath. Hazrak lies within this area and was no doubt its capital.

The stele not only commemorates Zakir's victory at Hazrak (with the help of his patron deity, Be'elshamayn), but it also goes out of its way to recall that it was in Hazrak that Zakir was made king (with the help of the same deity); as he is described in the opening lines as 'King of Hamath and Lu'ash.' This seems to infer that Hazrak was the capital of Lu'ash as Hamath was the kingdom or territory of Hamath. A separate coronation would take place in each capital. Zakir was thus king of both Hamath and Lu'ash, two adjacent territories resembling Judah and Israel, but under the one ruler, stretching from Hamath in the south towards Aleppo in the north. If Aphis marked the northernmost boundary, it stretched to within twenty-five miles of Aleppo.

Zakir, had the power over the two kingdoms and he defeated Aram/Syria and her allies. The stele tells how Ben-hadad had gathered considerable forces to crush Zakir. Ben-hadad brought a confederacy of more than ten kingdoms, mostly from the region round the mouth of the Orontes and the Amarus mountains, but including Cilicia, or the ancient Kue, united under Ben-hadad, to lay siege in Hazrak. Hazrak is a town named in Zech. 9:1. The context of Zechariah shows that the place is the same one.

Hamath is well known in the O.T. as one of the ancient border cities of northern Syria of considerable importance; the noun also described the territory of the 'city-state;'

(e.g. 2 Kings 23:33). Lu'ash has been identified with: (a) the region known as Luhuti in Assyrian annals, a country lying west of the Orontes and north of Phoenicia or (b) with the Nuhashshe of the Tell el-Amarna tablets. The latter do not help to locate its position (they do show that it contained several cities or 'city-states'), but other sources point to the region south of Aleppo as the area in question. The contents of the stele support this latter identification. Hazrak, the scene of the victory commemorated on the stele lies in this area, and the coalition of kings allied with the king of Damascus against Zakir comes from regions around the area north of Hazrak.

This stele was actually found in this area, south of Aleppo. Hazrak was almost certainly the capital of Lu'ash. Hamath and Lu'ash were two neighboring territories related in much the same way, both politically and geographically, as Judah and Israel. Hamath was the capital of the country of the same name. In relation to the twin states (Hamath and Lu'ash), it probably occupied a position similar to Jerusalem in Judah, while Hazrak corresponded to Samaria in Israel. Zakir was king of both cities and countries as the monument goes on to recall (Bordreuil 1982:135-141).

On the left side of the stele there are references given to Zakir's enthronement at Hazrak as king of Lu'ash some time preceding the events commemorated in the stele.

The monument is dedicated to 'Ilwer, now commonly identified as the Akkadian weather-god. Earlier writers transliterated the word Alor, and regarded the name as that of a local deity, otherwise unknown 'Anah' seems more likely to have been a place name rather than an adjective for "a humble man." It has been identified with a place "Anah on the Euphrates." This would strengthen the view that Zakir

was a usurper. It might even suggest that he had been appointed to both kingdoms by the Assyrians, and was himself a native of Assyria (Bordreuil 1982:139-141).

Let us look at the relationship of the Zakir Stele to 2 Kings 13:14-20. The O.T. story of Israel's dealings with Syria at this time is interesting since it contains the dying prophecy of the prophet Elisha about the impending defeat of Syria by Israel. Under Jehoahaz, Israel had suffered a crushing defeat, including the loss of some of her cities at the hands of Hazael. Jehoahaz's successor Joash went in desperation to the death-bed of Elisha (2 Kings 13:14-20 NASV).

¹⁴ When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"

¹⁵ Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows.

¹⁶ Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." And he put his hand on it, then Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands.

¹⁷ He said, "Open the window toward the east," and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot!" And he shot. And he said, "The LORD'S arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed them."

¹⁸ Then he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground," and he struck it three times and stopped.

¹⁹ So the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram only three times.

The sequel is described in verses 20-24:

²⁰ Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year.

²¹ As they were burying a man, behold, they saw a

marauding band; and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet.

²² Now Hazael king of Aram had oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

²³ But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now.

²⁴ When Hazael king of Aram died, Ben-hadad his son became king in his place.

Summary of the Zakir text

The OT narrative does not furnish us with any details about Joash's defeat of Ben-hadad, nor does it sketch in the wider political background. With the help of the Zakir inscription we are able to do this. Zakir's victory may have removed Ben-hadad himself.

During his reign and probably towards its close, Ben-hadad found himself engaged on two fronts, with Israel in the south and with Zakir, and the areas to the north of him. As events proved, he was defeated on both fronts, and the Syrian empire contracted at both north and south.

Israel owed her victory, partly at any rate, to the continuing power and pressure westwards of the Assyrian empire, which was destined, in the same century, to swallow her up.

4.5.4.5 Tell Fakhariyeh Statue

In northeastern Syria in 1979, a farmer discovered a life-size basalt statue while he was plowing his field near Tell Fakhariyeh, ancient Sikan, on the shores of the Habur River. It was identified as a statue of the governor of Gozan named Had-Yith'i. There is a bilingual inscription in Akkadian and Aramaic. On the front of his skirt are 38 lines of Assyrian cuneiform, and on his back are 23 lines

of alphabetic Aramaic. The Aramaic script has a surprisingly archaic appearance, but the artistic style and the appearance of the cuneiform signs, date to about mid-ninth century BCE. The writing presents the oldest known Aramaic inscription of substantial length. It also shows the Assyrian domination of the Habur Valley in this period.

The text commemorates the installation of the statue of Had-Yith'i in the temple of the god Hadad of Sikan. The dedication is presented twice, in both the Akkadian and Aramaic versions. In the Aramaic text, the first dedication reads:

The statue which Had-Yith'i set up before Hadad of Sikan, the canal-supervisor of heaven and earth, who showers abundance, and who gives pasture and watering places to all the lands, and who gives portions and offerings 'to all the gods, his brothers; the supervisor of all the rivers, who provides for all the lands; the compassionate god whose prayer is good, [and] who dwells in Sikan, the great lord, the lord of Had-Yith'i, king of Gozan of Sassnuri, king of Gozan for the preservation of his life, for the lengthening of his days, for the abundance of his years, for the well-being of his house, for the well being of his offspring, for the well-being of his people, and for removing sickness from him, hearing his prayer and accepting of the utterance of his mouth, [Had-of Sikan].(Mc Carter 1996:85-86).

4.5.4.6 Stela of Bar-Rakib of Sam'a

About 732 BCE, Bar-Rakib son of Panammu succeeded his father as ruler of the Aramean kingdom of Sam'al or Ya'diya. The ancient site of Sam'al is located at Zinjirli in Turkey. Excavations of this site were conducted in the late 19th century at Zinjirli. The language of this inscription is standard old Aramaic. One inscription was in the distinctive local dialect of other Sam'alian inscriptions. It was dedicated by Bar-Rakib to his father,

Panammu II, who died fighting on behalf of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BCE), evidently during Tiglath-pileser's campaign against Damascus, which fell in 732 BCE. For this reason the stela is dated between 732 and 727 BCE.

4.5.4.7 Texts from Deir 'Alla

Tell Deir 'Alla, Jordan is located 25 miles northwest of Amman, just north of the point at which the Jabbok River empties into the Jordan Rift. Excavations have shown that the site was occupied continuously from the beginning of the Late Bronze Age until Hellenistic times. Inscriptions written in ink-on-plaster were found in situ among the ruins of a eighth century BCE sanctuary. This was during the Dutch excavations in 1967, under the direction of H.J. Franken.

The script of these plaster texts from Deir 'Alla belongs to a distinct and independent regional branch of the Aramaic script. It is related to an unknown local dialect, exhibiting some features that associate it with Aramaic, but others that link it with nearby Canaanite languages, such as Ammonite and Hebrew.

The Aramaic script was in black and red ink. The text relates a version of the event of the king of Moab summoning Balaam to come help him. The Biblical account of the event is found in Numbers 22-24. What is particularly interesting is the name which Balaam uses to refer to the great ruling gods who sit in the assembly. He calls them "sdyn." "Shaddyayin," the plural form of the divine epithet "sadday" is known from the Bible. McCarter claims that the likely meaning of "Shaddayin" is "the ones of the mountain"

and this is probably the reason for its application to the great decision-making gods. In Canaanite tradition these ruling gods gather on a mountain. In the Bible the epithet "Shaddai" is most familiar from the Book of Job 5:17, but it occurs in other places, including the oracles of Balaam (Numbers 24:4,16) and the story of the patriarchs who, in one of the ancient traditions, knew the god of Abraham only as "God Almighty" or "El Shaddai" before they learned his name, Yahweh (Genesis 17:1, 35:11 and Exodus 6:2-3) (McCarter 1996:85-86).

4.5.4.8 Horvat Uza Ostrakon

Horvat Uza is located in the eastern Negev about 6.2 miles south of Arad. In the seventh century BCE, Horvat Uza was the site of a Judahite fortress, which was razed at the time of the Babylonian conquest of Judah in the early sixth century. This was established through the 1983 excavation conducted by Itzhaq Beit-Arieh and Bruce Cresson on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University and Baylor University (Waco, Texas). During the excavation a number of inscribed objects were found. Twenty-two of them were in Hebrew. One was very interesting because the script and language was Edomite. This suggests that the stronghold fell into Edomite hands at about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. The rather ill-defined boundary between Judah and Edom was disputed during the last years before the fall of Jerusalem (Obadiah 1-14). Excavations at nearby sites like Horvat Qitmit, an Edomite religious center only about six miles southwest of Horvat Uza, have shown that the Edomites had established themselves in the Negev well before the fall of Jerusalem. The Horvat Uza ostrakon is important evidence for Edomite incursions into

portions of the Negev previously controlled by Judah and for the early stages of the process that led eventually to establishment of the Hellenistic and Roman province of Idumea (the Greek name for Edom) in an area extending as far north as Beth-zur, about 15 miles south of Jerusalem.

4.5.4.9 Selfire Treaty

This broken stela was found in the small Syrian village of Selfire, about 15 miles southeast of Aleppo. It contains the longest inscription of Old Aramaic so far found. The text is 100 readable lines. The three broken pieces were identified as Selfire IA, II, and III. IA and II are presently in the Damascus Museum and III, which is so fragmented that the inscription could not be read, is in the Beirut Museum. The discovery of these inscriptions dates to about 1920 and it was not until 1931 that the first preliminary translation was available.

Selfire I and II record portions of the text of a treaty made between Mati'el, king of Arpad (Arfad) and the Assyrian king, Assurnirari V in 753 BCE. This was confirmed by a man named, Bir-Ga'ya, who appears to a provisional governor of the Assyrian empire. Arpad was the principal city of the neo-Hittite state of Bit Agusi. These states were a group of primarily Aramaic-speaking cities that appeared at the beginning of the Iron Age at various places along the southern base of the Taurus Mountains in southeastern Turkey and northwestern Syria.

The text gave a list of gods who were witnesses to the treaty. These included well known Mesopotamian and Syrian deities, as well as, "all the gods of Ktk and all the gods

of Arpah. Then there was a list of curses placed on Mati'el if he broke the treaty.

4.5.5 Phoenician

4.5.5.1 Introduction to Phoenician Inscriptions

A brief overview was presented about the development of the Phoenician alphabet in the introduction to Literacy and Inscriptions, 4.5. The following are some Phoenician inscriptions that elucidated the history of the northern kingdom and neighboring lands in respect to the time period of this dissertation.

4.5.5.2 Incirli Stela

In 1993, a UCLA survey team found a stele on the property of a villager near the village of Incirli, south of Karamanmarash, Turkey. The man had removed it from a mound that was being leveled for agricultural purposes near his land. A preliminary report on the Incirli Stela, written by Elizabeth Carter with an additional account about the recording of the stela by Bruce Zuckerman and Stephen Kaufman is very interesting:

The basalt stele shows a figure in profile that is placed in a stela-like frame in the upper left-hand corner of the obverse, essentially a stele in a stele. The piece carries multiple inscriptions. There is Phoenician on three sides; obverse, reverse and left side. It is possible that just under the figure on the front and on the right side are traces of straight lines suggesting that originally a cuneiform inscription was part of the text. Some see suggestions of Luwian (hieroglyphic Hittite) characters in front of the figure's face. These differences in script

size as well as the Greek boundary inscription on the back of the stele again reveal that the monument had a long history.

In the original study of the inscription, it became apparent that some of the letters were of different sizes and overwriting was common. The figure of a royal person stands in the stele within the stele. The figure itself is badly damaged and the details of clothing, headdress and hairstyle that might have given us clues to dating it are almost entirely gone. Nevertheless the image definitely has an Assyrian look and the proportions are very close to Assyrian court styles of the eight century. The text of the stele gives us a date to the time of Shalmaneser V (726-722 BCE) in the late eight century. The preliminary translation by Kaufman and Zuckerman remains more or less unaltered in original intent. It appears the likely purpose of the stele was used as a boundary stone placed in the southern area of kingdom of Gurgum (Carter 1998:1-3).

A summary of results of the contents of the Incirli Stele by Bruce Zuckerman and Stephen Kaufman includes the following;

The Incirli Stela contains a lengthy text written on all four sides of the stone in standard Phoenician of the late 8th century BCE. It is a commemorative boundary inscription marking the successful end of a territorial struggle between the kings of Cilicia (Que) and Kummuh and the various allied powers, presumably over the territory where the monument was originally erected. Since it seems clear that the monument was reused much later as a boundary stone with a Greek inscription of the Byzantine period, we cannot necessarily assume that the earlier text should be associated with the specific locale where the stone was discovered in 1993. Still, considering its size and weight, it seems unlikely that it had been moved very far from where it was first erected.

Of particular importance for the cultural history of the Ancient Near East is the detailed discussion of the use of mulk-sacrifices of sheep, horses, and if we read correctly - first-born humans in the process of the war, and the gods' reactions to those sacrifices. Classical historians had attested to the Phoenician practice of child sacrifice in times of distress, and archaeological evidence for child sacrifice has been found at Carthage and other Punic locations. However, the connection between the mulk-sacrifice and the sacrifice of humans has never been documented in a Phoenician text before, and many scholars have doubted the existence of the practice. This inscription provides that missing connection with apparent references to the mulk of a man, or a firstborn son. In addition, our inscription may clarify the meaning of the biblical practice of "passing children through fire" for molekh. The meaning of this practice in ancient Israel and its environs has been much debated. Some have proposed that molekh was a particular god that some ancient Israelites worshipped in the usual way, in violation of the commandment to worship only Yahweh. Others maintain that actual child sacrifice was involved, as mentioned in the biblical prophets. Although some scholars question the connection between the Punic practice of mulk-sacrifice and the biblical "cult of Molech" it is our belief that the Incirli inscription can provide insight into the conceptual underpinnings of a number of important ideas, narratives, and practices mentioned in the Bible, including the prohibitions against "passing children through fire" for molekh. (Zuckerman and Kaufman 1998:1-5).

A preliminary report on the inscription was given by the principal investigators at the Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society on March 17, 1996, and it understandably stirred considerable excitement. Indeed, there can be no question that the text will be studied by scholars in great detail for many years to come and promises to be the most important Phoenician inscription to be discovered in the 20th century.

4.5.5.3 Nora Stone

This irregular shaped stele, which measures 3.4 x 1.9 feet, was found in 1773 in the village of Pula, Sardinia, where it had been reused in the wall of a vineyard. Pula is near ancient Nora, the principal Phoenician settlement on Sardinia. The stone is presently to be found in the National Museum located in Cagliari, Sardinia. The writing is in large Phoenician letter (up to 4.7 inches) and the script is dated to the last quarter of the ninth century BCE or earlier. The translation was difficult, but it did contain place names such as Sardinia (srdn) and Tarshish (trss). There was more than one Phoenician settlement or colony with the name Tarshish, including famous ones in Cilicia (Tarsus) and Spain (Tartessus) (McCarter 1996:81-82).

4.5.5.4 Sarcophagus of Ahiiram, King of Byblos

The limestone sarcophagus of Ahiiram has the earliest substantial Phoenician inscription known. It was discovered in 1923 during excavations at Byblos. The epitaph identifies the deceased as Ahiiram, king of Byblos. Ahiiram's son and successor, Ittobaal commissioned the making of the epitaph. This sarcophagus and four other monumental Phoenician inscriptions from Byblos gave a sequence of five kings of Byblos, whose reigns spanned the tenth century BCE. Although the inscription on this sarcophagus is not within the time period of this dissertation; it is interesting to know about the historic evidence as it relates to the Phoenician rulers acknowledged in its script (McCarter 1996:80-81).

4.5.6 AMMONITE INSCRIPTION

4.5.6.1 AMMONITE STELE (Amman Citadel)

This is a gray-black basalt stele that was found in the Citadel, or fortress of Amman, ancient Rabbath-ammon, in the 1960's. It dates to the late 9th century BCE and is written in the Ammonite language. The language of the Ammonites is closely related to Hebrew and ancient Phoenician, but the script they used is much closer to the script used for Aramaic at that time.

It is generally believed to be a building inscription, of either a temple or the Citadel itself. Some have suggested that it is an oracle or instruction from the god Milkom, god of the Ammonites. The text contains a number of references to parts of buildings, but also has elements of a curse. It is interesting to evaluate the building description because it fits into a well-known type of construction of this period. It was customary when erecting a large public building to attach a record of the building to the structure indicating why it was built, and to whom the building was dedicated. Because this inscription is incomplete, we cannot be sure of its original purpose.

The following is the transliteration and the translation of the stele by William J. Fulco who works with the West Semitic Research at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California.

Line 1

[...m] lkm. Bnh.lk . mb't. sbbt [sss]

[..Mi]lkom, he has constructed for you the precinct entrances {...}

Line 2.

[...] . kkl.msbb lk . mt ymtn [...]

[...] that all who threaten you shall surely die [...]

Line 3

[...] khd . `kdh{} wkl . mrb {...}

[...] I shall surely destroy and all who enter [...]

Line 4

[...] wkl . sdrt yl nn sdq [m ...]

[...] and amidst all its columns the just shall reside [...]

Line 5

[...] l. tdlt bdlt . btn krh [...]

[...] there will hang from its doors an ornament [...]

Line 6

[...] h. tSc .bbn. `lm

[...] will be offered within its portico

Line 7

[...]wS [...] h. wn[...]

(unable to translate)

Line 8

[...] Slm .lk wS[lm]

[...] peace to you and pe [ace ...]

(Fulco 1978:39-42).

4.5.7 Hebrew Inscriptions

4.5.7.1 Siloam Inscription

Siloam Inscription from Jerusalem helps to elucidate the story in the Bible when king Hezekiah had a tunnel made in Jerusalem to provide a way for water to flow from the

Kidron Valley on the eastern side of Jerusalem into the Pool of Siloam about 30 feet lower (2 Kings 20:20-21).

This was done to provide water for the city which was under siege by Sennacherib. For detailed information about Hezekiah's tunnel and the Siloam inscription please refer to the entry about "Jerusalem" in Chapter Five under sites town planning under water projects.

4.5.7.2 Ketef Hinnom Silver Scrolls

Between 1975 and 1980, Gabriel Barclay discovered a number of tombs in and around Jerusalem. Most of them, however, had been robbed long ago except one, No. 25. This tomb was in a cave containing several burials located in Jerusalem next to the Church of St. Andrew, southwest of the Old City, on a rocky hill overlooking the Hinnom to the east, the site is called Ketef Hinnom, "the Shoulder of Hinnom." The tomb contained skeletal remains of 95 people, 263 complete pottery vessels, 101 pieces of jewelry (95 were silver and 6 were gold), many carved objects of bone and ivory, and 41 bronze and iron arrowheads. From these finds, it was determined that the tomb was from the end of the seventh or the beginning of the sixth century BCE, just before the Babylonian Exile.

Most importantly, there were two small silver scrolls, tightly rolled up. It was assumed that these scrolls were used as amulets on the dead bodies and that they contained some kind of inscription. When unrolled, the two strips of silver measured respectively 3.8 X 1 inches and 1.5 X 0.4 inches. The larger document has 18 lines of mostly legible script. Both were engraved with

benedictions written in Paleo-Hebrew letters characteristic of the early sixth century.

The inscription contained portions of Numbers 6:24-26, "May Yahweh bless you, and keep you; may Yahweh let his face shine upon you . . . and give you peace." This inscription is one of the earliest and best preserved that contains the name of Yahweh.

The largest of these scrolls clearly contains the sacred name YHWH (often transliterated as Yahweh). Dr. Barkay in personal discussions with this writer (in 1990 and in the mid-1990's) indicated his desire that these silver artifacts not be called amulets. He prefers the more religiously neutral term of "plaque." That word does not indicate some superstition (Mazar 1990:524) and (Barkay 1986:34-35).

4.5.7.3 Pomegranate Scepter Head

This pomegranate shaped piece of ivory, less than two inches high, was found by accident and offered for sale in an antiquity shop. It was brought to the attention of epigraphist Andre' Lemaire of the University of Paris (Sorbonne) in 1979, and purchased by the Israel Museum in 1988.

Encircling the shoulder of the ivory pomegranate is an inscription in eighth-century BCE Hebrew script, slightly more archaic in appearance than the script of the Siloam inscription (see 4.5.5.2.1.). The inscription reads: "Belonging to the house of [A holy thing of the priests]." The final sentence could also be translated, "Holy to the priests." The word "house" might refer to a priestly family that would have been identified by name in the missing portion of the inscription. It is very possible,

that the pomegranate belonged to the First Temple and was used there as the top of a staff (McCarter 1996:112).

4.5.7.4 Royal Steward Inscription

This inscription was found in 1870 in a burial chamber cut in the rock beneath a modern building in the village of Silwan, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Only the end of the name of the person buried in the tomb is preserved ("iah), but his title survives in complete form as "the one who is over the house." This title has been found on Hebrew seals, and in the Bible it is held by individuals with high-ranking government positions (1 Kings 4:6; 16:9; 18:3). This probably including responsibility for maintaining the king's household, "royal steward." The Hebrew letters indicate that this epitaph was carved at about the same time as the Siloam tunnel inscription or during the reign of Hezekiah. We know of two men, Shebna and Eliakim, who held the title, "who is over the house" in Hezekiah' administration. It is applied to Shebna in Isaiah 22:15 at the beginning of a prophesy in which he was condemned (verses 5-19) for having a tomb cut for himself in the rock in Jerusalem. It is possible that the small cavity in which this epitaph was found is the actual tomb mentioned by the prophet (McCarter 1996:115).

4.5.7.5 Gezer Calendar

This small limestone tablet, found in 1908 at Gezer is incised with 20 words written in clear alphabetic signs. The forms of the letters have an archaic appearance, and scholars have dated the tablet to the tenth century BCE,

before the emergence of the distinctive letter forms of the Hebrew national script. This tablet is described as the earliest surviving Hebrew inscription. The text gives the months of the year for agricultural activities, such as planting, ingathering, sowing, chopping flax, harvesting barley and pruning (McCarter 1996:102). More details are found under Farms and Equipment 4.10.1.

4.5.7.6 Samaria Ostraca

In 1910, a team from Harvard University under the direction of George Reisner discovered a large number of ostraca while clearing the floor of a building located immediately to the west of the royal palace of Samaria. This building, now became known as the House of the Ostraca, seems to have been an administrative center erected as part of a general expansion of the acropolis built in the mid-ninth century BCE by Ahab. At first the ostraca were mistakenly assigned to this period, but the building remained in use until the fall of the city, it has been agreed that the ostraca belong to the eighth century. Most contain dates in the text indicating the 9th, 10th or 15th year (once the 17th), no name of a king in rule is given. After evaluation the scholars have proposed that the best candidate for this king would have been Jeroboam II (787-746 BCE), and the form of the cursive Hebrew script favors this identification. It appears that the bulk of the 63 ostraca can be dated to about 779-771 BCE. These ostraca constitute one of the most important finds of writings related to ancient Israel. Their importance is related to not only information on the economic history of the

northern kingdom, but they give an extensive inventory of Israelite personal names, clan names and geographic designations. They provide extensive data for the study of the history of the Hebrew language as well as early developments in Hebrew paleography and orthography.

P. Kyle McCarter gives us very good information on the significance of the material from this site. Ostrakon 17 is an example of what other ostrica were like. The text was written on a fragment of hard gray pottery, and reads, "In the 10th year. From 'Azoh. To Gaddiyaw. A skin of refined oil." This ostrakon seems to be a dated receipt for a shipment of goods, in this case "refined [literally, "washed"] oil."

"Aged wine" is mentioned in many other ostrica. Whenever a shipped commodity is identified it is oil or wine. Most of the ostrica also indicate the place of origin of the shipment, usually one of a circle of towns that lay on the valley floor beneath the hill of Samaria. In Ostrakon 17 the town was 'Azoh or Azah, an unknown place that is usually identified with the Arab village of Zawata, about three miles southeast of Samaria in the direction of Shechem.

These receipts, coming as they do from the administrative center of Samaria, appear to have something to do with the fiscal organization of the northern kingdom.

The name Gaddiyaw, which is equivalent to the biblical name Gaddiel (Numbers 13:10), contains the element "-yaw," a short form of "Yahweh." This was the form of the divine name used in combination with other elements to construct personal Hebrew names during this period in the northern

kingdom. The form used at that time in Judah was "-yahu." Of 15 names in the Samaria ostrica that contain a divine element, nine have "-yaw" and six have "-ba'l." This ratio is sometimes taken as evidence that the worship of Baal was very widespread in the area of Samaria at that time. It is also possible, however, that "ba'l," which means "lord," was considered an acceptable title for Yahweh in this period (McCarter 1996: 103-104). Indeed this seems implicit in the words of the eighth-century BCE prophet Hosea, when he repeats Yahweh's warning to Israel that "in that day..., you will no longer call me 'My Baal'" (Hosea 2:16). Further information about Baal is found in this dissertation in the section under Material Culture titled, "Temples, Gods, and Cult Objects," numbered 4.6.2.1.

4.5.7.7 Inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud

Kuntillet 'Ajrud, overlooks the Wadi Quraiya at the junction of three principal roads in northeastern Sinai. Ze'ev Meshel of the Institute of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University lead the excavation of this site in the 1970's. Two buildings of the late ninth and early eighth centuries were found. The larger building had an open courtyard containing two ovens, stone benches, and on the south and west sides of the building were storage rooms. These things combined with the location of this structure seem to suggest that Kuntillet 'Ajrud might have been an Iron Age stopping off place for desert travelers.

What was most important was the discovery of a number of inscriptions. The majority were written on the white plaster that covered the north doorway entrance leading to the bench room. The writing was in a Phoenician script,

but the language was Hebrew. In the bench room there were pieces of plaster from the wall. Many of these were also inscribed in ink with the same script. In addition to these, there were large broken storage jars or pithoi. These jars were restored and also contained Hebrew inscriptions as well as drawings painted with ink on their outer surface.

The content of the inscriptions was directed to a religious theme. One fragment contained two-lines of a broken text. The surviving portion was translated:

Line 1: [... May he pro] long days and be satisfied, and [...]

Line 2: [... And] Yahweh of Teman will cause things to well [for him ...]

The language was specifically the southern or Judahite dialect of Hebrew. "Yahweh of Teman" was referring to "Yahweh of the Southland" which appears to be referring to the name under which the God of Israel was being worshiped. The Hebrew expression "prolong days" means to live a long life and the language of the blessing can be understood by comparison to biblical usage in passages like Deuteronomy 22:7, where the Israelites are enjoined to conduct their lives according to certain rules of behavior, "in order that it may go well with you and you may prolong days" (Mc Carter 1996:105).

Kuntillet Ajrud, Pithos

These storage vessels were about three feet high and weighed almost 30 pounds each. Both were covered with graffiti and crude pictures in red ink. One of the jars

showed grotesque figures standing side-by-side with their hands on their hips. One shows a man's torso, he has a bovine face, horns, hooved feet and a tail. The other is feminine and she has breasts and shows the same characteristics as the male figure. The Hebrew writing above the two figures was translated and read, "the asherah of Yahweh" ("his asherah").

"The use of the possessive pronoun ("his asherah") shows that we cannot simply read this as the invocation of a god and goddess, as if it were Yahweh and Asherah." If it is interpreted as a cult object, it seems clear that the invocation alongside Yahweh implies a considerable degree of personification. It was common to see that in cultic worship the male deities often were associated with other gods, such as Baal and the goddess 'Ashtarte" in the Ugaritic texts. It appears that the bovine-faced couples depict "the Young Bull of Samaria," as Hosea calls the idolatrous form of Yahweh worshiped in the capital of the northern kingdom (Hosea 8:6; 8:5 and 13:2) and his consort. This is supported by the Hebrew letters painted directly above the heads of the couple which reads, "by Yahweh of Samaria and his asherah." Other idioms found included another Pithos that read, "Message of [...] so[o of] 'Amaryaw: Speak to my lord..'I bless you by Yhweh of Teman and by his asherah. May he bless you and watch over you and be with my lord". In this we see by "Yahweh of Tem," are references to which a national god was worshiped locally at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, rather than "Yahweh of Samaria," It is also written in the northern dialect, as shown by the spelling of Teman (tmn), which contrasted with the "two-line" inscription (tymn), which is written in the

southern dialect. The man also was using his father's name, ;Amaryaw, which contains the element "-yaw," the form of the divine name Yahweh used in the northern kingdom at this time to form personal names, in contrast to the form used in Judah which was "-yahu." This gives further evidence of the presence at Kuntillet 'Ajrud of residents or visitors from both the northern and southern kingdoms.

In the area of the bench room archaeologists also found two stone bowls inscribed with the names of their owners. One translated, "Shema'yaw son of 'Ezer." The other bowl read, "Belonging to 'Obadyaw,'" contained the name of the god of Israel in the shortened form "-yaw," indicating that they were from Israel rather than Judah. This jar weighed over 400 pounds and from the inscription it shows the ongoing presence of people from the northern kingdom at the site. It appears that it was used for ritual purposes. Ze'ev Meshel, the excavator of the site, speculated the 'Obadyaw's father might be the same man who is identified in 2 Chronicles 17:14 as a ranking military officer under Jehoshaphat, king of Judah in the mid-ninth century (870-846 BCE). The fact that 'Obadyaw's name indicates that he was from Israel rather than Judah, argues against this possibility, but the form of the Hebrew script does favor a late mid-ninth century date (McCarter 1996: 110).

The writer of this dissertation believes that some of the following observations should be kept in mind when considering the Kuntillet Ajrud pithos with the inscription in Hebrew, "by Yahweh of Samaria and his asherah." The Shema section of Deuteronomy 6 definitely taught that YHWH is One. Other sections of the Torah gave commands against

idolatry and adopting the ways of the Canaanites. The biblical prophets preached and warned against such idolatry.

Some times there is a temptation to presume that because of a finding such as the Kuntillet Ajrud pithos that there was a wide spread believe among many Jewish people that Yahweh had a consort. But, it seems that more information should be taken into account before this conclusion is reached.

Could the inscription have been made for one of these reasons?

(a) The inscription was made as a provocation against a traditional worshiper of Yahweh.

(b) The inscription was made and displayed publicly so that some devout Jewish travelers would be offended and therefore not stay at that location.

(c) The inscription was made by a good hearted idolater to give or sell to a Jewish person. The idolater had a very defective knowledge of devout Jewish beliefs and he thought that he was doing something good by ascribing that Yahweh was a "family man" type of god who was rich and successful enough to have his own asherah.

(d) The Hebrew inscription and the figures appear to have been made by different hands. Perhaps the original art figure drawings were made by one artist who was devoted to idolatry. Then perhaps sometime later the Hebrew inscription was made for one of the above reasons.

4.5.7.8 Inscriptions from El-Qom

W. G. Dever, conducted a salvage operation in 1967, at Khirbet el-Qom, a site in the Judean hills about eight miles west of Hebron in the general vicinity of Lachish and Tell Beit Mirsim. A tomb containing pottery and inscriptions from the time of the Judean monarchy had recently been found. The tomb was already partially robbed. It consisted of a central room with four burial chambers on the eastern wall. It became evident that an inscription had been removed from a pillar that was between two of the burial loci. He and officials were able to recover the inscription from the nearby village before it could be sold into the antiquities market. The crude inscription was written in Hebrew. It indicated that one of the burial chambers had belonged to a man named Uriah, upon whom it invokes the blessing of Yahweh.

Other graffiti was found including one piece that had an inverted hand. An Islamic talisman is the hand of the daughter of Muhammad, which symbolized piety, looked like this but the writing of the graffiti was old and was not Islamic. Also, there is nothing else that showed the tomb had been entered between the time it was sealed during the Iron Age and the time of its discovery in the 1960's. The use of representations of human hands as religious or magical symbols has long pre-Islamic history, however details of its significance is not entirely understood (McCarter 1996: 111).

In 1994, a private collector gave permission for a picture to be taken of an inscription he had from Khirbet El-Qom. This piece was made of soft white chalk typical of El Qom and the Hebrew script was identical to the Uriah Epitaph. The inscription read, "Blessed be your stone

cutter. May he lay old people to rest in this!" Its primary purpose, then, was to invoke a blessing on the stonecutter, the man who cut the tomb in which the inscription was carved. The word for "stonecutter" is the same as that used in the Siloam inscription from Hezekiah's tunnel in Jerusalem (See Jerusalem under sites). In the Bible the stonecutter is indicated as having an important occupation (2 Kings 12:13) and 1 Chronicles 22:2, 15 (McCarter 1996:112).

4.5.7.9 Arad Ostrakon 18

Yohanan Aharoni from the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University led the group that excavated Tel Arad from 1962-1967. The excavators recovered more than 100 inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic and other languages, most of them dated to the eighth century BCE. One hoard of 18 letters was found at Stratum VI which corresponds to the last years of Judean control of Arad. These letters belonged to a man named Eliashib son of 'Ishyahu, evidently the commanding officer of the Arad citadel. The letters indicated that he was also the superintendent of the city's storehouses. He was responsible for providing provisions not only for his own troops, but also military personnel stationed in a network of cities in the Negev highlands that secured the boundary of Judah against the Edomites from the south. Consequently these ostraca authorized the distribution of specific quantities of wine, oil, and flour or meal, which were shipped to places like Ramath-negev and Beersheba. The ostrakon numbered 18, read:

To my lord, Elyashib:

May Yahweh be solicitous concerning your welfare. Now then, give Shemaryahu a lethech, and to Kerosi give a homer. And as for the matter you instructed me about, the House of Yahweh is well. It endures.

Aharoni suggested that the signs used here were meant to indicate one lethech and one homer. Both of these were standard dry measures; both are mentioned in Hosea 3:2. A homer (homer) was the normal load of an ass (hamor), which has been estimated as 3.8 -6.52 bushels. A lethech was half a homer, or 11.9-3.26 bushels. If these are the correct measurements, the amounts were larger than one man needed which indicates these men were receiving food for two groups. The reference to the House of Yahweh must be referring to the Temple in Jerusalem. There was a temple at Arad, but Aharoni determined that it was dismantled prior to Stratum VI. The writer is offering assurance that the Jerusalem Temple had not come to harm despite the growing threat of war. "It appears Eliashib had dispatched a subordinate on a mission to Jerusalem to check on the well-being of the Temple. The last lines of the letter state, "And as for the matter you instructed me about, it [or he] is well. He is residing in the House of Yahweh." It seems to indicate that the person possible could have been a cultic functionary or a political refugee who had entered the Temple seeking asylum. (Mc Carter 1996:119-120).

4.5.8 Seals, Bullae, and LlkM Jars

4.5.8.1 Introduction

Seals made of different types of hard, semiprecious stones, and their impressions on jar handles and on clay bullae, are an important source for the study of personal names, official titles, the administrative system, and the iconography of the period. Most of the seals from controlled excavations are found in eighth and seventh-century levels at Judean sites, but some have also been uncovered in the northern kingdom of Israel.

4.5.8.2 Seals of Israel's Neighbors (Phoenicia, Ammon, Edom and Aram)

These seals were made with similar iconography and manufacturing technique and are differentiated mainly by their personal names.

Local workshops of seal-cutters probably operated in Samaria and Jerusalem. The engraved Hebrew seals, dated from the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, are the most important source of our knowledge of art and iconography in Israel and Judah. The themes were inspired mainly by Phoenician art, and thus indirectly from Egyptian traditions. But these foreign symbols were probably employed only as decoration without any religious significance. Original local motifs are also featured.

Among the motifs are various animals (roaring lion, cock, horse, bull, gazelle, cow nursing a calf, monkey, and locust), mythological creatures (griffin, sphinx), and adaptations of Egyptian themes, such as the winged sun disc, the Uraeus snake, and the scarab. Plant patterns include the lotus flower, papyrus, pomegranate, and palmette. Sometimes specific objects are shown, such as the lyre. The more complicated scenes depict humans in various attitudes—such as priests in praying posture, and a figure presenting the symbols of government to the owner of the seal (Mazar 1990:507).

An example of an official's seal from the kingdom of Israel features an artistically carved figure of a roaring lion the "Shema' servant of Jeroboam" Shema may have been a minister of Jeroboam II. This seal, as well as others from

the northern kingdom, were probably inspired by Phoenician and Aramean artistic traditions (Mazar 1990:519).

4.5.8.3 Bullae

Among the seal impressions from the last decades of the kingdom of Judah, three groups of clay bullae are of special importance: (1) a group found at Lachish Stratum II; (2) a collection uncovered in a house in the City of David; and (3) in destruction levels from the last days of Judah (586 BCE). The majority of Judean seals and seal impressions were undecorated and included only the name and title of their owner; others featured certain artistic motifs (Mazar 1990:520).

4.5.8.4 LMLK Jars

One of the most significant finds in Judah is seal impressions found on jar handles. These impressions are known as "lamelech" seals due to the word "lmlk" on the upper part of the impression, meaning "belonging to the king" (Mazar 1990:455).

Almost a thousand such sealings are known; they were impressed on the handles of jars of a very typical ware and form, made of the same clay, possibly even in the same workshop as indicated by neutron activation analysis. The jars had a narrow neck, wide shoulders, a narrow base, and four handles; their capacity varied from 12 to 14 gallons (45 to 53 liters). Almost thirty such jars in one storage space were found at both at Lachish (Stratum III) and Tel Batash (Stratum III). Only some of the jars had seal impressions on their handles. Lamelech sealings can appear on all four handles. The sealings were often carelessly

made, as if in haste. Studies have shown that the number of actual seals used was in fact small, approximately twenty.

There are two types of lamelech sealings: one featuring a four-winged beetle, a motif originating in Egypt. The other type was decorated with a two-winged elongated object resembling the winged sun disc.

The lmlk-type seal impressions and the accompanying "personal" stamps are a distinct group related to the royal military administration during the time of Hezekiah. Other seals belonged to specific dignitaries, such as princes (titled "son of the king"); a seal of a princess carries the words "Maa'danah," daughter of the king with a lyre. Other titles noted include "who is over the house" (perhaps denoting the prime minister—the highest rank in the Judean administration, as known from the Bible;

"servant of . . ." with the king's name, as in "Abiyau servant of Uzziah;" and that of the functionary named "over the tax." Another courtier was the "na'ar," "steward," exemplified by "Benayahu steward of Haggai." These stewards probably served important personages. Two stamps belonged to "sar'ir," "city governor" (perhaps governor of Jerusalem). This title was also inscribed on jars at Kuntillet Ajrud.

Some of the names on the seals and seal impressions are actually known from the Bible. These names include:

(1) "Berachyahu son of Neriyahu the scribe," who may be identified with Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe during the time of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36).

(2) "Jerahmeel the king's son," whom we presume was Jehoiakim's son sent to arrest Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:26).

(3) "Gemaryahu son of Shaphan," an important official in Jerusalem during the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:10-12). This seal impression was discovered among the fifty-one bullae uncovered in the City of David.

(4) "Gedalyahu Over the House," whose seal impression was found at Lachish. The latter may be identified with "Gedaliah Son of Ahikam," the appointed governor of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39:14). (Mazar 1990:519-520).

4.5.9 Geographic References Found in Inscriptions

4.5.9.1 Introduction

There have been a number of historic texts from Egyptian sources and other later references that have provided evidence for the geographic references to names of cities, regions, countries, roads and highways that are discussed in this dissertation. These have been valuable in the elucidation of the history of the northern kingdom and neighboring lands. A brief explanation of some of these texts follows.

4.5.9.2 "Story of Sinuhe"

In Egypt, the period of the 12th Dynasty is known as the Middle Kingdom (2040-1786 BCE). It was a time of great prosperity in a reunified Egypt. There was considerable Egyptian contact with the Levant during this period as reflected in the "Story of Sinuhe" (Pritchard 1973a:18-23). It is a tale of an Egyptian who, upon the death of Amenemhet I (1962 BCE), fled from Egypt to the Levant. He first journeyed to the city of Byblos, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, but then turned inland toward Qedem,

apparently located near the border of the eastern desert. He settled in the land of Araru (possibly in the region of Gilead or Bashan), where he was given land by a ruler of Upper Retenu. At that time, Retenu was one of the Egyptian names for Canaan. The boundaries of Retenu are unclear. Possibly "Upper Retenu" referred to the area north of the Jezreel Valley, while "Lower Retenu" lay to the south of the valley (Aharoni 1979b:66-67). There Sinuhe lived until he returned home to Egypt to die. The story describes how Sinuhe entertained and supported Egyptian messengers who passed through his country, and how he protected the frontier of his overlord's territory. It gives a detailed description of the produce of the land of Retenu: figs, grapes, wine, honey, olives, fruit, barley, emmer-wheat and cattle. The list is similar to what is found in Deuteronomy 8:8 with reference to the land of Canaan.

4.5.9.3 Egyptian, Execration Texts

Execration Texts are other sources which give information on the life in the Levant during the MB IIA period (2000-1750 BCE). These texts, discovered in Egypt, are divided into two groups. The earliest, written on bowls, consist of curses pronounced against rulers and dignitaries among the opponents of Pharaoh; among them were the rulers of districts and towns in Canaan. Some of the towns mentioned, included Ashkelon, Beth Shan, Rehob, Jerusalem, and Byblos (Aharoni 1979b:92). The second group, about a century later, is written on clay figurines shaped like shackled prisoners including 64 names, most of which represent known cities such as Jerusalem, Ashkelon, Aphek, Acco, Achshaph, Shim'on, Pehel, Hazor, Laish (Dan),

Ashtaroth, and Tyre. All of these and others are royal Canaanite cities, well known to us from the Bible.

4.5.9.4 Egyptian, "The Inscription of Khu-Sebek"

Another Egyptian text is a stele that dates to the reign of Sesostris III (1878-1843 BCE). It is titled "The Inscription of Khu-Sebek, Called Djaa," it briefly mentions an Egyptian military campaign to the foreign country of "Sek-mem (possibly Shechem), which, along with Retenu, fell to the Egyptians (Pritchard 1979a: 230).

4.5.9.5 Egyptian, Inscriptions Of Thutmose III

During the reigns of Thutmose III and Queen Hatshepsut (1512-1482 BCE), Egypt seems to have lost ground in Asia. Thutmose III was co-regent with Hatshepsut (1504-1482 BCE), when at her death he became sole ruler, and upon her death he began his first expedition to secure control of the southern Levant (Pritchard 1979a:175-186). The first campaign took him from Sile (close to the Suez Canal) across northern Sinai to Gaza covering a distance of 130 miles (210 km.) in nine or ten days (Pritchard 1979a:175-176)). The enemy was headquartered at Megiddo, so Thutmose III needed to cross the barrier of Mount Carmel. He had a war council to decide which three passes to take; Zephath-Jokneam, the Aruna-Megiddo, or the Taanach. He selected the narrower one, the route from Aruna to Megiddo. The Canaanites had split their chariot force, so the Egyptians came through the pass, took camp near Megiddo, and engaged in battle. This led to a seven month siege, the city was conquered, and booty taken. All of this including geographic locations, cities, passes, rivers and roads were mentioned in his annals (Pritchard 1979a:177-180).

Three copies of the topographical text of Thutmose's victory have been discovered (Aharoni 1979b:94). Two of these texts, apparently written soon after his first campaign, list 119 towns and regions that were now under his control, while the third lists 231. These rosters are the largest listings of geographical names from the Levant, of which half have been identified with some certainty. The list indicates that Gaza, Sumur, and Kumidi were Egyptian administrative centers. Other areas of Egyptian involvement included the coastal plain, the Jezreel Valley, Lower Galilee, the Beqa Valley and in Transjordan, the Damascus and Bashan regions. Egypt wanted to control the International Coastal Highway and Transjordanian Highway, along with the connecting routes to the Mediterranean from Jezreel or Galilee.

Thut-mose III's successor, Amenhotep II (1450-1425 BCE), conducted three campaigns into the Levant. The descriptions of these were not as well documented as Thutmose III (Pritchard 1979a:245-48).

4.5.9.6 The Expedition Journals from Seti I (1300 BCE)

These were valuable as they described the many fortresses and wells along the route from Egypt to Palestine. Two stelae from his reign giving this information came from Beth-shean (Aharoni 1979b:93-94).

4.5.9.7 Egyptian Reliefs of Ramses II, Ramses III and Shishak

Ramses II's reliefs showed conquered towns in the land of Canaan, but the stylized pictures did not give any details about the places. Ramses III's reliefs gave

extensive details about his war with the sea people as well as Shishak's reliefs (924 BCE) (Aharoni 1979b:94-95).

4.5.9.8 Papyrus Anastasi I

The Anastasi Papyrus I is a satirical letter dating to the early Ramesside era (Late Bronze to Early Iron Age). The text survives in several copies of varying levels of completeness. One fragmentary copy of the text can be dated to the reign of Ramesses III. Since the name of Ramesses II appears in several passages, Gardiner has given it a earlier date (Gardiner 1964:2,4). It takes the form of a letter from one scribe, Hori, to his fellow scribe, Amenemope, both apparently were recorders of military events.

From the point of geographical information there are a number of places mentioned that had to do with the military campaigns of Ramesses II. As an example, in sections XVI-XX, Hori challenges Amenemope's claim to be a Maher, apparently the title of an Egyptian emissary in Syria. The word is found in no other text (Gardiner 1964:20). Hori launches into a series of questions about Syria, Phoenicia and Canaan, descending southward as he goes. He describes the conditions in these locations, and the activities of a Maher stationed there. He describes a hypothetical situation in which the Maher, inexperienced in the difficulties of travel, ends up in dire straits before finally managing to rectify the situation.

The text concludes, in section XX, with Hori reasserting his conviction that Amenemope is a second rate scribe. Hori then pleads with Amenemope not to be angry, and promises to teach him, in particular to educate him

about the foreign lands with which Egypt was interacting at the time (Gardiner 1964:28-30).

The Anastasi text is a valuable resource, in providing information about the role and duties of the Egyptian administration during the Ramesses era. It also gives us a look at Egyptian foreign relations at the time in naming countries, cities, and locations. To see the complete translation of this document refer to (Gardner 2003:1-20).

4.5.9.9 Amarna Tablets

These are cuneiform tablets (written in Babylonian script) found in 1887 at Tell el-Amarna, the ancient site where Pharaoh Akhenaton founded his capital in 1372 BCE (Tell el-Amarna) about midway between Memphis and Thebes. They form part of the archives of his reign (1379-1362) and of the last eight years of the reign of his father Amenophis III. There have been an estimated 378 Amarna tablets published. Of these, 356 are diplomatic letters which passed between the Egyptian king and Asian rulers. Over forty letters were correspondence with allies of the Pharaoh from Babylon, Assyria, Mitanni, and the Hittites. Others were between him and his vassals, such as the king of Byblos, a Syrian viceroy. Some were from kings of cities in Canaan such as Jerusalem, Hebron, and Shechem. One significant feature of these tablets is the writing in which the kings use the word Habiru (SA.GAZ in Akkadian) which is translated as "marauder" to identify the people whom the Canaanites claim are trying to conquer them. The tablets then stress calls to the Pharaoh for defensive actions against the Habiru. The letters were another

important document used to identify the geographic places of the Ancient Near East (Aharoni 1979b:169-176).

4.5.9.10 Other Sources

Boundary descriptions were difficult to define from most sources. One of the best examples was an Aramaic inscription on the stele from Selfire in North Syria (see the section Aramaic inscriptions in this dissertation) (Aharoni 1979b:86).

In order to identify an ancient settlement, it is necessary to keep three factors in mind: (1) location in accordance with the ancient sources; (2) analysis of the name, the development and its preservation in the area; and (3) the archaeological evidence (Aharoni 1979b:124). Most sources permit the localization of a settlement in the general vicinity only and usually do not provide exact geographical details. It is important to check all of the texts, both earlier and later, in which the name is mentioned, naturally keeping in mind the possibility that the settlement may have moved some distance away from its original site during the course of time. A continuous attestation of the name from the biblical period through the Roman, the Byzantine and the Arab and Crusader periods up to the present greatly strengthens any conjectured identification. Nevertheless, one must exercise extreme caution in handling later sources whose aim is to confirm historical sites. Examples of some of these sources are: Talmudic passages, Eusebius, Jerome and especially the Medieval documents. The main value of these texts lies in the contemporary place names which they mention and describe. Aharoni gave a number of examples of this important point in his book, *The Land of The Bible* (

Aharoni: 1979b). In writing this dissertation the author strongly supports the seriousness of this analysis. This is another reason why the archaeological sources are so important to confirm the geographic locations of places and historic events in connection to the Bible. More specifically, to this dissertation on the Archaeological Excavations and Biblical Interpretation of cities that elucidate the History of the Northern Kingdom and Neighboring Lands: from Omri (876 BCE) to the Assyrian Exile (721 BCE).

4.5.10 Concluding Comments on Literacy and Inscriptions

Archaeological discoveries of ancient inscriptions have contributed considerable information about the historic time period of this dissertation. These inscriptions were recorded in Aramaic, Hebrew, Phoenician, Akkadian/Assyrian, Moabite, Ammonite and the Ancient Egyptian script.

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE), king of Assyria mentioned "Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri" (2 Kings 19.16; 2 Kings 9-10). The Black Obelisk also mentions King Hazael of Damascus who appears in the Hebrew Scripture (2 Kings 8:28; 9:14). Another inscription of Shalmaneser III described how he used his army against Israel at Samaria in which he stated ". . . I smashed all my foes like pots."

The Scripture records that God stirred the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser (745-722 BCE) to come against His people (2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chron. 5:26). In his royal annals Tiglath makes a number of references to Old Testament characters, naming Azariah of Judah and Menahem of Samaria who paid him tribute. He said he replaced Pekah with Hoshea on the

throne of Israel during his campaign between 734-732 BCE. According to 2 Kings 18:9, Shalmaneser V started the final siege of Samaria. According to the records of the Assyrians it would seem that Shalmaneser died and Sargon actually captured the city. The Hebrew text does not say that Shalmaneser actually captured Samaria. The record stated that "they" took it (2 Kings 18:9). Isaiah 20:1 gives reference to Sargon's name when he stated that Sargon sent Tartan and captured Ashdod. Sargon's palace was excavated at Khorsabad and inscriptions were found. One record confirms Isaiah's statement, "Ashdod's king, Azuri, plotted to avoid paying me tribute. In anger I marched against Ashdod with my captain, conquering." Another inscription found at Khorsabad states that Shalmaneser died while fighting at Samaria, and that he, Sargon II (721-705 BCE), succeeded him. He also mentioned the number of Israelites he deported, 27,290. He then rebuilt Samaria, settled Assyrians in the cities and placed an officer over them as governor.

Although King Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) ruled after the events of the designated dates of this dissertation, the ancient inscriptions told much that supported information on the historic picture of Israel and her neighbors, namely Judah. They confirmed campaigns he had against Judah and Jerusalem with mention of King Hezekiah. The Hebrew text was specific on these campaigns by Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18:13 to 19:8. The Assyrian inscriptions of Sennacherib's campaigns were the Taylor Prism; the Oriental Institute Prism and the Lachish reliefs on his palace walls at Nineveh. Further evidence of King Hezekiah's efforts to prepare Jerusalem against an Assyrian

attack was documented by a tunnel he had built to bring water from the Gihon spring into the city as was explained in 2 Kings 20:20.

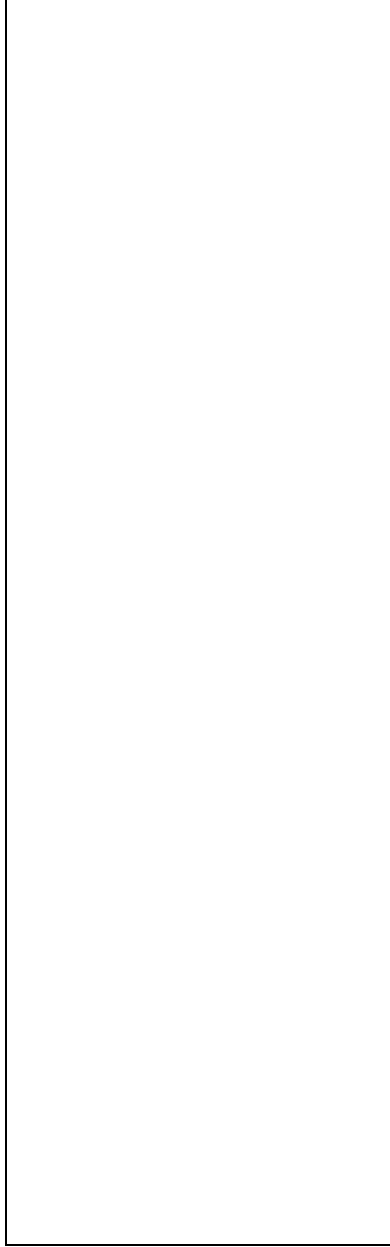
The Arameans were acknowledged as another enemy of Israel in the Hebrew Scripture and numerous Assyrian inscriptions. Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE) describes his battle at Qarqar in 853 BCE against a Southern Aramean coalition of twelve kings which included Hadadezer of Damascus, the king of Hamath and Ahab the Israelite. On another monument this ruler refers to Hazael, the usurper, as a "son of nobody" (2 Kings 8:7-15). Tiglath-Pileser III (747-727 BCE) lists Jehoahaz of Judah along with the king of Hamath and others from Phoenicia, Philistia and Moab. A number of cultic inscriptions have been found. One is the Melcart Stele set up by Ben-Hadad, son of Tabrimmon the son of Hezion king of Aram, for his god Melcart (1 Kings 15:18). Another important stele found near Aleppo was set up by Ben-Hadad, son of Tabrimmon the son of Hezion king of Aram, for his god Melcart (1 Kings 15:18). This conflict enabled Israel to recapture areas lost in Trans-Jordan (2 Kings 12:17-18; 13:3-7, 22-24). The numerous inscriptions of this time period gave frequent references to cultic gods and religious worship in the various lands.

Hebrew inscriptions written on storage vessels (pithos) were found at sites identified as Kuntillet 'Ajrud and El-Qom confirmed religious pagan gods such as "asherah."

Another important inscription was a stone set up by Mesha, king of Moab, as a record and memorial of his victories. Significant items that were recorded on this

(Moabite) stone were: (1) Mesha's wars with Omri and (2) Mesha's public buildings. This inscription in a remarkable way supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27.

Another important point that should be acknowledged is the ancient texts that confirmed locations and names of sites mentioned in the Hebrew text. A few writings that were very significant were the: Amarna Tablets, Egyptian Reliefs of Ramses II and the Papyrus Anastasi I.



Black Obelisk of King Shalmaneser III (reigned 858-824 BC). This 6-foot (1.8-metre) black basalt piece was discovered in 1845 at ancient Kalhu (Nimrud), biblical Calah.

Figure 4.5-1



a. This panel of the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III shows Jewish captives bringing tribute to the King.



b. This panel of the black obelisk of Shalmaneser III shows and in cuneiform mentions, "Jehu the son of Omri".

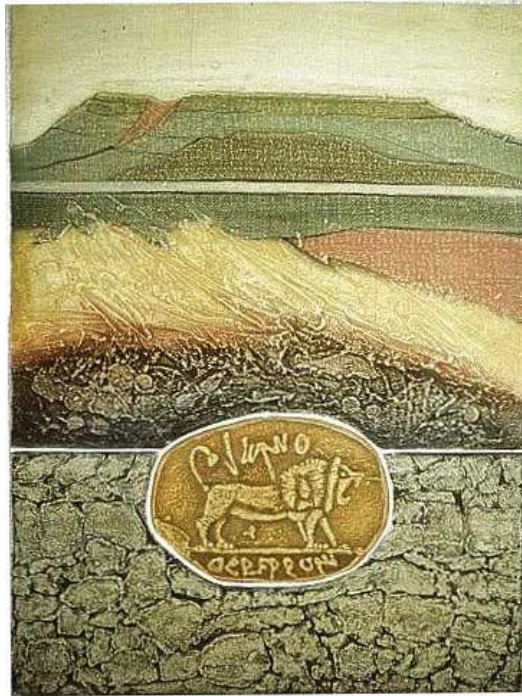
Fig. 4.5-2



Fig. 4.5-3 Moabite Stone Stele of Mesha



a. Royal stamp Seal Type 3 at Gibeon



b. A famous artifact found at Megiddo was a lion seal, with the Hebrew inscription, "belonging to Shema, servant of Jeroboam." Depicted in this illustration is an artist interpretation of this seal, the tell at Megiddo and a stone wall dating to the time of Solomon.

Figure 4.5-4



Royal Stamp Seal from Gibeon showing Imlk Iron II



Inscription showing the name ZIP from Gibeon

Figure 4.5-5

4.6 TEMPLES, GODS, AND CULT OBJECTS

4.6.1 Introduction

The Pentateuch gave guidelines to what the Israelite religious practices were to be. These were covered in detail in the Book of Leviticus, the biblical descriptions of the Jerusalem temple and the various prophecies against foreign cults. Discoveries relating to the Israelite cult practices during the Divided Monarchy are seen in the excavations of cult centers that were uncovered at places like Dan, the temple in the fortress of Arad, and the sacrificial altar at Beer-sheba. Other items that contribute to our knowledge of religious practices have been the discovery of altars, religious installations, and other religious artifacts. See Figure 4.6-1

The following is a brief background about the gods which affected the Israelite culture.

The late bronze tablets recovered from Ugarit presented a full description of the Canaanite pantheon, and they throw a startling light on the degrading nature of Canaanite fertility-worship. The chief deity was El, variously known as the "father of men" (abu adami) and the "father of years" (abu shanima), whose consort, Asherat, was familiar to the Israelites as Asherah. Their offspring was the fertility-deity Baal, the god of wind and storm Lord) (Khalaf 2003:3-6).

Baal was identified as a true "high god." He was acknowledged as head of the pantheon at Ugarit. The goddess Anat, consort of Baal, was often depicted as violent and sadistic, and her functions as divine courtesan gave formal

sanction to ritual prostitution in the Canaanite religion. Anat was also known as Astarte and Asherah. Along with Anat there were patronesses of sex and war. Other Canaanite deities included: Mot, the god of death; Reshep, the god of pestilence; Shuman, the god of health; and Koshar, the god of crafts.

Ugaritic texts make it evident that Canaanite religion was against the prescribed religion given to Hebrews and the Israelites (Gen. 15:16; Exodus 23-24).

4.6.2 Identification of the gods

4.6.2.1 BAAL

Baal was also equivalent of the Amorite Hadad. The name means "lord," "master," or "husband" when applied to men (1 Chron. 5:5) as well as to gods. The title "Baal" was applied specifically to Hadad from the beginning of the second millennium BCE (Khalaf 2003:5).

Another feature about Baal was association with the bringing of rain to fertilize the land after the summer dry seasons. For this reason he had a strong control on the Canaanites and others that recognized him. His power brought a dramatic contest for the Israelites to maintain their worship of Yahweh (Khalaf 2003:6).

The Baal cult challenged Israelite worship in the pre-Exilic period, as shown in contest on Mount Carmel incident (1 Kings 18). It was uniformly condemned by the biblical prophets for its corruption and child-sacrifice (Jer. 14:22, Jer.19:5 and Hosea 2:8 -13, 21-23).

Statuettes of Ba'al have been found at Israelite sites. Several were made of bronze and dated as early as the 15th century BCE at Shechem and as late as the Iron Age I (12th to 10th centuries BCE) at sites such as Megiddo and Hazor. He was represented by his conical hat and a stubby lightning bolt held in his upraised hand, similar to the bronze representations of Zeus in the later classical world. He often holds a small round shield in his left hand. Bronze pegs sometimes descend from his feet to attach the figure to a pedestal (as seen from the statue at Shechem (Khalaf 2003:5-6).

Ugarit, Megiddo, and Lachish depict Baal as a powerful warrior whose cult-animal was the bull, typifying the power of fertility. A 4 inch bull figure from Middle Bronze II-C, was found at Ashkelon in the 1990 excavation directed by Lawrence Stager. The body of the figure was made of bronze that was covered with silver sheeting. This was known because of a small portion that was retained on it. The horn, ears and tail were made of forged copper and inserted into the body. A cylindrical ceramic model shrine with a beehive style roof that housed the calf was found together with the calf. It had a door-way that was just large enough for the calf to pass through. Hinge scars indicated that a clay door had once been fitted to the shrine to close it. Although this figurine was from the MB II time, it apparently characterized the cultic worship of Baal that continued into all phases of the Iron Age.

In northern Israel golden calves were set up at royal high places in Bethel and Dan by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-33; 2 Kings 10:29). Textual evidence that worship of calf images continued in northern Israel until the late eighth

century can be found in the condemnation of the practice by Hosea, the northern prophet (Hosea 8:5-6, 13:2). An Ostrakon found at Samaria gave information about the worship of Baal. Further details about this Hebrew Inscription can be found in the section of this dissertation numbered 4.5.5.3.

4.6.2.2 ASHERAH

Both the masculine plural and feminine plural forms of Asherah, in Hebrew are translated by the word "groves" in the English versions of the Bible. She was called according to the Ugarit tablets, "lady Asherah of the sea." Apparently her domain proper was the sea, just as that of her husband El was the heaven. She is also described as the "progenitress of the gods." Seventy of the gods were her children, including as mentioned above, Baal, Anath, and Mot (Khalaf 2003:3-4).

Asherah as a goddess was also known in other places. Her name was found in inscriptions from Tell el Amarna (Egypt), Nabatea (Petra), and Babylonia (where she is called Ashratum). In the OT her name occurs both in the singular and the plural in a large number of scriptures. While the OT sometimes refers to Asherah as a goddess (1 Kings 18:19, 2 Kings 23:4; 2 Ch. 15:16), the name is used also of an image made for her (1 Kings 15:13).

The Israelites were commanded to cut down (Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:5) and burn (Deut. 12:3) the asherim of the Canaanites, and were likewise forbidden themselves to plant "an Asherah of any kind of tree" near God's altar (Deut. 16:21).

There have been numerous figurines found at Israelite sites of the Iron Age II period that have been identified

as Asherah-figures because of the combination of their offered breasts and pillar-shaped bodies. These figurines have been said to be replicas of the full-sized figures of Asherah carved out of wooden posts or living tree trunks at the shrines condemned in the Bible, which as mentioned above were to be cut down or burned.

The heads on a number of these figures were made from a mold while the cylindrical bodies were either handmade or turned out on a wheel. At Tel Batash (Timnah) several clay molds of a female figurine, were found that dated to the eighth-century BCE.

These clay molds were formed by pressing clay against original masters, which may have been made from fired clay or from wood. The molds were then fired and used for casting a number of clay duplicates. The images were used as votives to be left at the shrines or as amulets to be taken away to private homes. Plaque-shaped clay figurines similar to those made from these molds begin to turn up in the Late Bronze Age (15th to 13th centuries BCE) and are frequently found in Iron Age homes. They were not effectively outlawed until Josiah's reform of 621 BCE (2 Kings 23:24).

There were several other types of figurines found throughout Canaan that dated to the 14th and 13th centuries that probably represented some aspect of Asherah or Astarte. These female figurines were characterized by the head having exaggerated ears that were pierced for earrings; the nose is pinched into the shape of a birdlike beak; the arms are only vestigial appendages. The naval and sometimes the breasts are marked with small holes. This style can be traced back to predecessors in third millennium BCE of northern Mesopotamia, apparently they

were brought to Syria, Canaan, Cyprus and on into Egypt in the second millennium BCE (Khalaf 2003:3-4).

See Figure 4.6-2.

4.6.2.3 MOLOCH

Moloch was an Ammonite deity, whose worship was closely connected with astral divination (1 Kings 11:7; Amos 5:25-26) and whose ritual was characterized by parents sacrificing their children by compelling them to pass through or into a furnace of fire (Delitzsch 1980:416-417). He may be identified with the deity Malik or Muluk worshipped during the Third Dynasty of Ur. He was also revered at Mari where his name appeared on Akkadian texts that dated to 1800 BCE and continued to 800 BCE. In 2 Kings 17:31, the men of Sepharvaim in east-central Syria burned their children as offerings to Adrammelech and Anammelech (the compound forms of the deity Malik or Benhad or Moloch).

In Jer. 32:35, there seems to be a connection with Baal, whose name is also an appellative, and to whom, as Baal-melqart, human sacrifices were offered at Tyre.

The practice of offering children as human sacrifices was condemned in ancient Israel. The Law of Moses demanded the death of anyone who offered his child to Molech or as a sacrifice (Lev.18:21; 20:2-5). Solomon, however, built a high place for this god in "the hill that is East of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives" (1 Kings 11: 7).

There are references in the OT that refer to child-sacrifices but they do not name Molech. Psalm 106:35-37 is an example of this: "The Hebrews are said to have ". . . mingled themselves with the nations ... learned their works

and served their idols ... yea they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto demons ..."

Manasseh is said to have practiced augury, and used enchantment, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits (divining demons) and with wizards (those possessed of occult knowledge because they were under the control of a divining demon) (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chron. 33:6). King Ahaz, 730 BCE, burnt his children in the fire (2 Chron. 28:3). Samaria was judged for this sin (2 Kings 23:10, 13). Josiah, in Judah, destroyed the high places of Molech (2 Kings: 23:10,13). Ezekiel was still condemning the practice early in the 6th century BCE (Ezek. 16:20). The Babylonian Exile seems to have put an end to this worship. Archaeological evidence for child sacrifice is ambiguous, and though burned skeletons of children have been recovered in Israelite sites from Megiddo, Gezer, Tannach, and other locations, they cannot be demonstrated as being the definite victims of sacrificial rites. It is important, however, to note that the death of these children could have possibly been related to sacrificial rites.

In 1996, one of the most important inscriptions ever discovered in Turkey was an inscription now known as the Incirli stele. This stele gives important information about Molech and child sacrifices. Information on this document is found in Chapter 4 under Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions, 4.5.4.3.

4.6.2.4 Hadad of Sikan (Aramaic God)

In 1979, a farmer discovered a life-size basalt statue while he was plowing his field near Tell Fakhariyeh, ancient Sikan, on the shores of the Habur River in northeastern Syria. It was identified as that statue of the governor of Gozan named Had-Yith'i. The inscription contained a bilingual inscription in Akkadian and Aramaic. On the front of the statue are 38 lines of Akkadian cuneiform, and on his back are 23 lines of alphabetic Aramaic cuneiform. The Aramaic script has a surprisingly archaic appearance, but the artistic style and the appearance of the cuneiform signs date to about mid-ninth century BCE. The writing presents the oldest known Aramaic inscription of substantial length. It also indicates that there was an Assyrian domination of the Habur Valley in this period.

The text commemorates the installation of Had-Yiti's statue in the temple of the god Hadad of Sikan. The dedication is presented twice, in both the Akkadian and Aramaic versions. In the Aramaic text, the first dedication reads:

The statue which Had-Yith'i set up before Hadad of Sikan, the canal-supervisor of heaven and earth, who showers abundance, and who gives pasture and watering places to all the lands, and who gives portions and offerings 'to all the gods, his brothers; the supervisor of all the rivers, who provides for all the lands; the compassionate god whose prayer is good, [and]who swells in Sikan, the great lord, the lord of Had-yith'i, Kings of Gozan of Sassnuri, Kings of Gozan for the preservation of his life, for the lengthening of his days, for the abundance of his years, for the well-being of his house, for the well being of his offspring, for the

well-being of his people, and for removing sickness from him, hearing his prayer and accepting of the utterance of his mouth, [Had-of Sikan].

(Mc Carter 1996:85-86).

This inscription gives an insight into the religious culture of the people in Syria during the time period of this dissertation. This information is also found in the section titled, Literacy and Inscriptions, 4.5.4.4

4.6.2.5. Baal-zebul (God of Ekron)

One of Israel's kings who ruled between Ahab and Jehu, not mentioned in any Assyrian text, but important to our study, was Ahaziah.

Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay injured; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury." But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Get up, go to meet the messengers of the King of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron?' Now therefore thus says the Lord, 'You shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went. (2 Kings 1:2-4)

Ahaziah's injury led him to send messengers to consult Baal-zebul, a god at the Philistine city of Ekron. An accurate picture of this god is still impossible, since the original meaning of the name "zebul" is not yet known for certain. It is hoped continued excavations at Ekron will recover more information about the god. Some scholars presently believe that Baal-zebul was a local, Philistine version of the Canaanite god Baal (Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 1-3). The last part of the name, zebul, means "flies," and so the complete name means "Baal of the flies" or "Lord of

the flies." But this is a form of Baal that has not been found elsewhere in the Near East (Blank 2002:1-2).

Some scholars have gone to the classical world to attempt to link Baal-zebub to Zeus Apomuios, "fly-averting Zeus" or "flycatcher Zeus" (Cogan and Tadmor 1988b:1-3). Since it is difficult to explain naming a god after the flies that buzz around a sacrifice or around any decaying carcass, many scholars mention that perhaps Baal-zebub is a pejorative of the name Baal-zebul. Baal-zebul is known from the Canaanite religion; the name refers to the god Baal as Lord Prince or "lord of the lofty abode"(Cogan and Tadmor 1988b:1-3.). The Lord God of Israel was upset with Ahaziah for wanting to consult a rival god (2 Kings 1:3). Perhaps through Elijah this Baal-zebul, or "Lord Prince," was mocked by being called "Lord of the Flies." Scholars, though, have reached no firm conclusion on the identification of Baal-zebub/zebul. At the site of Ekron pieces of male figurines (perhaps idols) have been unearthed, but nothing firm has been learned concerning the identification of the gods of Ekron.

4.6.2.6 Assyrian Gods

The Assyrians had multiple gods and it would take a detailed study to cover this subject. The following is a brief summary of some of the main gods.

In ancient Assyria, a king was not just a ruler. He was a high priest of the god Ashur (main god of Assyria and war). He was accountable to Ashur on behalf of his kingdom.

The king was "elected by the gods" although he was not of a divine nature. During his coronation, an Assyrian king, would speak the following words:

Before Assur, thy god, may thy priesthood and the
priesthood of my sons find favor, with thy straight
scepter make thy land wide;
May Assur grant thee quick satisfaction, justice, and
peace.

(Frankfort 1996:160).

In the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II, the bas-relief that was placed behind his throne showed his devotion to the god Ashur. This was also seen in other reliefs of Assyrian kings. See Assyrian Architecture 4.4.

The scene showed two figures of Ashurnasirpal II surrounding a sacred tree and pointing towards a winged disk. This latter most likely represents the god Ashur while the sacred tree (previously misleadingly called "Tree of Life") has been interpreted as representing the fertility in the land of Ashur. Beside the king there were protective genies spraying him with holy water as a supernatural protection. They use a "cone-fruit" and have either a bucket or basket in the other hand that have been interpreted as containers for flowering seeds to reproduce the land. The tree in this relief resembles a palm tree with a palmette on the top; other trees were done with pomegranates, grape vines, fir and date trees. Sometime two trees were used together, such as the date with a grape. (Reade 1986:26).

Another Stele of Ashurnasirpal II from Nimrud shows him with a mace in his hand, a rosette on his wrist, and

five godly symbols above him. On his necklace was his shield to protect his holy monarchy and his life as a servant of the gods. The mace in his left hand was most probably a mark of his authority with which the king presented himself as the sole authorized ruler of the land of Ashur while the rosette on his wrist granted him luck from Ishtar. These rosettes were found in large numbers inside the temple of Ishtar. Sometime, during the Neo-Assyrian period, they replaced the star symbol (Reade 1998: 15). He is extending his right hand and snapping his fingers to five symbols, that each represents a god. This is a gesture of respect as he prays to these gods. The symbols of these gods and what they represent are:

(1) A helmet decorated with seven horns representing the supreme god, Ashur. This is the distinctive head-dress of Ashur.

(2) The winged disk, its origins and meaning are controversial. Some scholars argue that the disk in Assyria represented the sun god Shamash while others interpreted it as the symbol of Ashur or Ninurta (War god) (Reade 1998: 15).

(3) A crescent within a full circle is symbolic of the moon god Sin (moon). Its Akkadian name was Ushkaru. It was considered to have magical powers. Sometimes the crescent was enclosed with a disk; this meant there was a fusion between them that symbolized an eclipse (Black and Green 1998:54).

(4) A fork known as lightning or thunderbolt. This represented the storm god Adad (Ishkur). Sometimes it was held as an attribute by the god. During the Neo-Assyrian period some carved slabs show the god Ninurta (War) carrying triple-lightning symbols, probably because he has taken a role of Adad (Black and Green 1998: 118).

(5) A eight-pointed star that represented the planet Venus and symbolized Inana/Ishtar, goddess of love and war. In Neo-Assyrian seals, the upper body of Ishtar is sometimes positioned above a crescent enclosed by stars (Reade 1998: 15).

The king wore a row of similar symbols on his chest with a cross (similar in shape to a Maltese cross), instead of a winged disc for the sun.

According to early Sumerian inscriptions, "seven" is a name given to a group of gods who acted against evil demons using supernatural spells. Clearly, the number "seven" had a significantly great importance in the Mesopotamian art. There was a frequent usage of "seven stars," "seven gods," "seven demons," and "seven sages" (Black and Green 1998: 162-164).

The Assyrians used human-headed winged bulls, known as "Lamassu." They were to serve the genii in protecting Assyrian palaces. They were deliberately placed at the main gate of a palace to prevent enemies from coming in. Lamassu also appeared in the throne room as a power impact and to impose respect-by-fear presence toward the kings (Frankfort 1996:146-147).

At Babylon the Ishtar gate and the walls of the processional way were covered with lions, bulls, and the snake gods or "dragons." It has been estimated that there were more than five hundred and seventy five such figures. These animals were a reminder to the people that the gods were always present. The snake god or "dragon" was a symbol of various gods that were thought to have magically protective factors. When the Assyrian King Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) took over Babylon, he brought back this symbol declaring it as the beast of the state god Ashur (Black and Green 1998:162-164). Some other animal symbols used for their gods included the horse, mongoose, scorpion, fish, bird, goat, eagle, and ram.

4.6.3 Israelite Cultic Places

4.6.3.1 DAN

After the division of the Kingdom, Jeroboam I erected two religious centers on the borders of his Kingdom, at Bethel and at Dan (1 Kings 12:26-33). His purpose was to undermine the monopoly of the ritual center at Jerusalem founded by David and Solomon just half a century before. He also introduced the golden calf into his temples as a cult symbol; it was possibly considered to be the pedestal for the unseen God of Israel, like the cherubim in the Jerusalem Temple (Mazar 1990:492).

The ritual center at Dan was uncovered at the northern edge of the mound near the spring. The pottery found under a square platform of the ritual center dated to the end of the tenth century BCE and the destruction of the city in the ninth century BCE. This platform (podium) was probably

erected by Jeroboam I and enlarged during the reigns of Ahab and Jeroboam II (Mazar 1990:492).

The podium of the tenth century was an imposing structure, with a 19 m long facade of large ashlar. A. Biran first explained the podium as an open-air platform, a "bamah" ("high place"), but later he changed his mind and concluded that the podium served as a foundation for a temple. This conclusion was based on the similar find of a palace podium at Lachish which was the foundation of a Israelite temple (Mazar 1990:493).

A rectangular sacrificial altar 5x6 m in size, built of ashlar, stood to the south of the podium in an open courtyard (Biran 1993:329). Two large pottery pithoi were found near the podium, on which a snakelike decoration was applied. Their function was probably to hold libation liquids. Farther south, there was a small plastered pool whose water, derived from the nearby spring of Dan, must have been used in the ritual. Another installation was explained by the excavator as related to water libation ceremonies, while others interpret it as an oil press from which first-quality olive oil was produced for the religious ceremonies (Mazar 1990:494). This first sacred enclosure was severely burnt in a violent conquest during the invasion of Ben-had I, Kings of Aramean Damascus, in 883 BCE (Mazar 1990:494).

Later during the ninth century BCE, perhaps in the reign of Ahab, the sacred enclosure at Dan was rebuilt on a larger scale. The temple's podium, built of ashlar, was repaired and enlarged, measuring 19 m X 19 m; ashlar steps led to it from the south. The altar to the south of the podium was now approached by a flight of steps and surrounded by a square enclosure (12.5 m x 14 m) which was

fenced off by an ashlar wall. Of the altar itself, only a fragment of a corner horn was preserved. This permits us to understand what the reconstruction of this altar would have been like with four horns. It would have been similar to the larger altar discovered at Beer-sheba. A smaller horned altar, made of a single stone, stood at the corner of the enclosure. A well-paved courtyard surrounded the podium and the altar.

On the west side of the sacred enclosure, several elongated rooms were found. They were arranged in a row and appear to have had various functions related to the cult practices. One was probably an assembly room; it had a long rectangular hall and a pedestal at one end. Another room contained a square foundation of an altar and three iron shovels.

The ritual complex at Dan is the only actual example of an Israelite royal ritual center (Mazar 1990:495).

Dan was destroyed in the Assyrian conquest of the Galilee in 732 BCE, but the sanctity of the site was remembered for centuries. During the Hellenistic period the enclosure was rebuilt and used again. A bilingual Greek-Aramaic inscription found there is a dedication "to the God who is in Dan" (Mazar 1990:495). See photograph of the podium at Dan in the chapter on Town Planning, 4.3-4.

4.6.3.2 BEERSHEBA

The prophet Amos refers to the sanctuaries at Dan and Beersheba in the same context (Amos 8:14); he further mentions Beersheba together with Gilgal and Bethel as places of worship (Amos 5:5) and a "high place" at Beer-sheba is said to have been destroyed by Josiah (2 Kings 23:8).

A large ashlar altar with horn-shaped cornerstones was discovered at Tel Beer-sheba. It was found dismantled; its stones used as building materials for the storehouses of Stratum III. This latter level was destroyed in a heavy conflagration in the late eighth or early seventh centuries BCE. Consequently, the altar must have been in use earlier, during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, and could well have been known to Amos (Herzog 1993:171-172). Perhaps its destruction can be associated with King Hezekiah's religious reform (2 Kings 18:3-4, 22). Its original location in the town of Beersheba is unknown, in spite of several suggestions. Perhaps it stood in an open-air sanctuary or in the courtyard of a temple which was not preserved. The construction of the Israelite altars at Dan and Beersheba from ashlar should be noted, as it is contrary to the biblical law which demands that their construction be of uncut stones [Exodus 20:25-26; Deuteronomy 27:5-6]. See Figure 4.6-3a.

4.6.3.3 ARAD

The fortress of Arad contained a small temple, the only known provincial shrine in Judah. It was erected on the site of an earlier open cult place belonging to a tenth century BCE village (Stratum XII); this village may have been related to the settlement of Kenite families at Arad (Judges 1:16). Thus the sanctity of the place was retained for hundreds of years. A temple in a royal fortress probably did not contradict the official policy of the Judean authorities, in spite of the rejection of such sanctuaries by the Jerusalem prophets. Y. Aharoni suggested that the Arad temple was one in a series of Judean "border temples," erected along the border of the Kingdom, like the

temples at Dan and Bethel in the Kingdom of Israel. The temple probably served the garrison of the fortress and perhaps also the population of the region around Arad.

The temple comprised a large courtyard, a broad room, and a holy of Holies in the form of a raised niche at the western end of the structure. A sacrificial altar was found in the courtyard that measured 2.5 m x 2.5 m (about 5 x 5 cubits), complying, in both building technique and dimension, with the biblical law (Exodus 20:24-25). Placed inside the niche against its rear wall, were two standing stones (*massebah*); one, painted red, was larger than the other. At the entrance to the Holy of Holies, there were two monolithic stone altars of different dimensions, each standing opposite the *masseboth* of comparable size. The two altars would have been used to sacrifice animal fat, birds, or incense. Of special interest were potsherds found near the temple that contain the names, "Pashhur" and "Meremoth." These are the names of priestly families known in Jerusalem during the time of Jeremiah and Ezra (Jeremiah 20:1; Ezra 8:33) (Amiran and Ilan 1993:82). See Figures 4.6-3b and 4.6-4.

According to Aharoni, the temple at Arad was founded in the tenth century BCE (Stratum XI). It continued to be used, undergoing various renovations, until the time of Josiah. The sacrificial altar in the courtyard became obsolete in Stratum VIII, perhaps as a result of the religious reform of King Hezekiah, a reform that was evident also at Beer-sheba. In the last Iron Age level (Stratum VI), the use of the temple was deliberately terminated, as evidenced by the fact that the small altars in the Holy of Holies were found lying on their sides covered by plaster. The cancellation of the temple before

the final destruction of the fortress may be attributed to the religious reform of Josiah (2 Kings 23) (Aharoni 1993:82-84).

4.6.3.4 Tel Qasile

Tel Qasile was a Philistine city. Although the occupation of Tel Qasile concluded with its destruction in the 10th century, it provides us with general information about the religious beliefs that influence later generations of Philistines and Israelites.

Many cult objects and artifacts were found in the excavation of the temple area. They consisted of typical Philistine ware and also artifacts from Aegean and Egyptian origin like scarabs. There were faience beads; ivory objects; small pottery vessels in the form of birds; and anthropomorphic jugs designed as fertility goddesses with breasts functioning as spouts.

The sanctuary was already built in the first city in the 12th century BCE, and rebuilt two times, before the city was destroyed in the 10th century BCE for unknown reasons. To which deity the temple was dedicated is not known.

Little information about the Philistine religion is known. The Bible mentions priests and diviners among the Philistines (1 Sam. 6:2). In Gaza and Ashdod, the god Dagon of Phoenician origin was worshiped (Judges 16:23, 1 Sam 5:2). The local deity in Ekron was Ba'al Zebub. In Tel Qasile a pottery ostraca was found with "Beth Horon" written on it. A possible conclusion is that the god in Tel Qasile was Horon, a Canaanite god. It is probable that the Philistines upon coming to the Land of Israel took over the worship of local, in this case Canaanite, gods.

The first two temples consisted of one room, but the third temple was extended to three rooms. The third temple also had a shrine.

Although there were similar temples in Israel and neighboring countries, for instance the one-room temple in Hazor, it seems that the one in Tel Qasile is somewhat unique. There is only one description known of a Philistine temple. This is the temple of Gaza as described in the story about Samson in Judges 16:23-31. The temple in Tel Qasile had pillars in the central room in the third phase of its construction. It measured only 6 x 7 meters. Also other temples of the same period are not large; this was because a temple was meant to function as the house for the deity.

The Tel Qasile site continued to be populated until the destruction of the town in the 10th century BCE. At the end of the 9th century BCE it was again destroyed, again for unknown reasons. After this destruction the city stayed deserted during the 9th, 8th and 7th centuries BCE. There was a short reoccupation during the 7th century BCE. This may be related to the expansion of Israelite territory under King Josiah, as the pottery finds of this period look like Israelite ware (Mazar 1993:1204, 1207, 1209-1212).

4.6.4.1 Women and House Religion

4.6.4.1.1 Introduction to Women and House Religion

Food storage vessels, cooking pots, dishes, food remains, and loom weights define women's work areas in Israelite houses. These implements frequently occur together with incense altars and female figurines in house

rooms and courtyards. Often jewelry and accessories that Israelite women used to deflect evil forces accompany their household weaving and cooking tools. Examples of cultic artifacts and furniture that some Israelite women employed in household rituals were found at Lachish, Tell Masos, Tell el-Far'ah, Beer-sheba, and Tell Halif.

One of the most interesting finds regarding cult objects were found inside houses at Lachish. These houses were located near the city gate and south of the palace. They dated to the eighth century BCE and consisted of the female figurines and jewelry that accompanied women's household items. Each dwelling contained at least one piece of jewelry, most of it related to a religious function through Egyptian mythology and ethnographic parallels. The contents of House 1008 included: a female figurine with a draped headdress and an imitation cowrie (porcelain-like shells from mollusks) amulet; clay spindle whorls; burnt fibers; cooking and storage vessels. Modern Middle Eastern cultures use cowrie shells as amulets to deflect the evil eye from infants because the shells look like eyes. House 1002 held another eye amulet, a bone sacred eye scarabaeid, as well as lamps and women's weaving and cooking tools. In addition to a loom beam, loom weights, and a dyeing vat, House 1003 had a lamp, a chalice, cooking pots and a blue faience bead. Women wore blue and green stones to avert evil, especially the evil eye (Willet 2000:1-2).

Besides cooking pots, House 1032 produced: six beads, one of them gold; a faience Nefertum amulet (Egyptian patron of the rising of the sun that appears as man with a crown of lotus blossoms); a carnelian spacer; a shell fragment and a talisman device to avert evil. People

regularly choose red as a color for these talisman motifs because they believe it deflects demons and evil eyes. In addition, they think demons fear jewelry made of gold or other shiny metals. In Locus 1031, two eye amulets were found, one was a blue faience cowrie and the other was a bone pendant with ring-and-dot designs. These amulets were worn by Israelite women to protect themselves and their newborn infants. In Locus 1033, a hand-molded goddess head from a vessel was discovered along with two scarabs from the Twenty-sixth to the Twenty-second Dynasty. These finds at Lachish confirm the importance of magic jewelry and female figurines in the everyday lifestyle of some of the Israelite women before the Exile (Willet 2000:3-4).

Other houses in the city which were only partially excavated showed finds similar to the houses south of the palace. The following finds help to support the fact that the majority of these houses in Lachish had religious articles in them along with the domestic artifacts. Some of the household goods uncovered from House 1089 included loom weights, a lamp, assorted pottery, a ploughshare, two bone fan-handles, and a steatite scarab. In House 1078 there was found a figurine with a curled wig and pointed cap, a lamp, a cooking pot, and storage jars (Willet 2000:4).

House 1040 presented a green faience quadruple divine eye amulet and a bone disk pierced for suspension. Similarly, House 1043 had a bone disk with circle designs, pierced for suspension, accompanied by evidence of women's cooking activity in the form of cooking vessels and burnt olive stones. The bone disks pierced for suspension probably were hung from necklaces or possibly from the

doorways of houses. Manifesting Israelite women's concerns for protecting themselves and their children from an evil eye and the child-stealing demons were the presence of: bone pendants and fan handles with ring-and-dot designs; the green faience quadruple eye; and the sacred eye scarabaeid. The beads, faience deity amulets, and figurines come from feminine weaving and cooking contexts. They illustrate the religious jewelry some Israelite women wore and the images they placed in their homes to protect themselves and their children. Many present day Middle Eastern women continue to use amulets to combat the same fears as some ancient Israelite women did (Willet 2000:5).

4.6.4.1.2 Sites related to women and House Religion

Tell Masos

The structures and artifacts in several dwellings at Tell Masos suggest that some early Israelites maintained household shrines. In Room 307, four figurines, typical of votives such as were found in the Hathor temple at Timnah, demonstrate that the residents of this house depended on this goddess for protection. This would have been in addition to or instead of worship in a public sanctuary. They probably used the hearth and mud brick structure with ash residue, as well as the courtyard bench, for metalwork and associated religious rituals invoking the family goddess. Room 331, which residents entered near the courtyard bench, held three incense burners, three lamps, a bead, a large number of shells from the Red Sea, and a Canaanite-Phoenician style ivory lion head. The lion symbolized and accompanied the powerful protector goddesses of the Egypto-Canaanite pantheon. Its presence with the

incense burners and lamps in Room 331 implies that a woman with a newborn child slept there and attempted to protect herself and her newborn with shells and beads and by burning oil and incense to welcome the goddess and to deflect the presence of jealous spirits.

The conspicuous benches, careful plastering, and body shard paneling suggest that Room 169 in House 167 functioned as a shrine because plastered and decorated walls with benches around them are defining architectural features of domestic cult rooms in the southern Levant. Several artifacts discovered in the room itself and in and around House 167 hint at luxury votive offerings. A bone scarabaeid carved with animals and a limestone lion head are connected with the goddess Asherah. At the center of House 42's outer court, next to an ash pit, stands a 0.5 m high structure with an attached bench. No accompanying artifacts indicate that residents employed the structure in technological activities, and it resembles offering podiums that furnish cult areas in the Levant. A cooking pit, jugs, bowls, and a cooking pot indicate that a woman prepared food in the area near the elevated structure. Other items found that suggest household religious rituals took place in this house to deflect demonic forces were: a bone amulet with ring-and-dot designs; a chalice fragment, and a decorated stand.

Excavations of Area G rooms at Tell Masos brought to light items from the seventh to early sixth century BCE. Some of the finds included: female and animal figurines; lamps; and a furniture model. Others were women's textile production implements such as spindle whorls, needles, and pins. Also there were food storage and preparation vessels

like cooking pots, bowls, storage jars, and kraters. The presence of ritual artifacts in the environs of women's implements illustrates the importance of household religion to some Israelite women's daily life (Willet 2000:5-6).

Tell el-Far'ah (Tirzah)

Most of the Israelite dwellings from the tenth century Level 7b at Tell el-Far'ah, biblical Tirzah, included either a female or an animal figurine in their household commodities. Horse figurines, often accompanied by arrowheads, came from several buildings in the southern section of the residential district as well as from the defense fosse and the open space facing the city gate. While the war goddess symbolism of horse figurines labels those from public locations as amulets for military men, those from houses must have fulfilled a purpose similar to the protective figurines that guarded Mesopotamian houses (Black and Green 1998:162-164).

Finds from Houses 187, 149B and 161 on the western edge of the settlement show that some Israelites did not confine their religious thoughts and activities to public temples. These finds included a ivory pendant, flute-player amulet, female figurine fragment, model sanctuary, beads and a pierced disk. In Houses 176, 427, and 436 more women's religious items were found such as: bovine heads; a cow nursing calf motif; beads; a blue jewelry plaque and a figurine of a woman with a tambourine. These give evidence that women's religious beliefs and rituals had a wider ancient Near Eastern heritage associated with fertility and a mother's protection. No specifically male accoutrements accompany these votive artifacts; on the other hand, items

like household pottery and the spindle whorl confirm women's interest in them (Willet 2000:7).

Biblical and other ancient Hebrew texts like the Khirbet el-Kom and Kuntillet Ajrud inscriptions imply that Asherah acted as Israel's protective goddess. Mention of Asherah occurs in the biblical context of the death of the son of King Jereboam I while he was living here at Tirzah. The prophet Ahijah informs Jereboam's wife that her child will die and God will punish Israel because they have made "asherahs" (1 Kings 14:15). "Jereboam's wife went away back to Tirzah, and as she crossed the threshold of the house, the boy died" (1 Kings 14:17). Israelite figurines, including those in Tirzah, represented Asherah, who not only supposedly partnered with El/Yahweh in providing children, but also protected them and their mothers from infant mortality and short female life span. This provides the background against which the prophet Ahijah reprimands Jereboam's wife for making images of Asherah and allows her child to die.

The northeastern section of the tell is particularly rich in cultic finds. House 442 contained an incense burner and Cypriot bowls. The neighboring House 440 produced a nursing female figurine; a harnessed horse head from a zoomorphic vessel; an alabaster pendant; six beads; model sanctuary and another figurine showing a female with tambourine (Willet 2000:8).

Several of the houses in Level 7 at Tell el-Far'ah have courtyard alcoves where it is thought women repeated prayers and incantations; poured libations; and burned oil and incense to the protecting household goddess. Women's

cooking installations predominate in these courtyard areas where excavators also found fragments of female figurines, zoomorphic libation vessels, and women's textile-producing tools. Tell el-Far'ah demonstrate many women's religious practices in their households (Willet 2000:9).

Tell Beersheba

The eighth century BCE Israelite houses in Tell Beersheba Stratum 2 provide several examples of cultic artifacts in women's cooking, food storage, and weaving areas. Front Room 94, the site of a woman's oven and cooking pots, held a lamp and a fragment of a zoomorphic figurine. Stationing a figurine to guard the entrance and lighting a lamp to attract the beneficent deity and deflect evil ones are rituals Near Eastern many women habitually practiced.

Courtyard 36, itself a kitchen, borders both Room 94 on the north and Room 25 on the south, where excavators found a female figurine, miniature lamp, and a model couch. Architectural structures that resemble offering shelves line the sides of Courtyard 36. These afford natural places for household shrines that honor the deity whose function was to guard against potentially damaging evil eyes and spirits that attempt access to the house.

The long central Room 48 of Building 25 contained: a figurine fragment, beads, bracelet, loom weights, a decorated amphora, cooking pots, and a large number of bowls and storage jars. The women's jewelry, textile production tools, and cooking equipment that surround the figurines in these Israelite houses affirm that women owned

them and incorporated them in their household religious rituals.

The Room 25 pillar-base figurine had a flattened head and striped neck similar to the Ashdoda figurine. The Ashdoda figurine was a combination of a female figurine and offering table in which the head and chest of the goddess form the back of the throne or chair, while the seat of the chair is her lap (Willet 2000:9). Similarly shaped "seated female" figurines with offering-table laps come from Assyrian Assur. The Ashdoda derives from Mycenaean black and white striped "divine nurses". One form stands on a pillar base and supports a child; another form seats a goddess on a throne-chair with arms down to hold a child at its waist.

Model furniture that represents the lap of the child-protecting goddess appeared with figurines and incense burners in Houses 25, 808 and 430. Additional figurines occurred with lamps. These cultic artifacts from the women's work areas at Tell Beer-sheba indicate that women positioned images of the family protective goddess near vulnerable entrances to their dwellings, provided her with votive offerings, and burned incense and oil to invoke her aid (Willet 2000:10).

Tell Halif (Lahav)

At Tell Halif (Lahav), Field 4 exposed the remains of a household shrine in Stratum 6B. Elements of the shrine mixed with ordinary household pottery in the ground floor rear broad room of a late eighth century four-room house. On floor G8005 of the room, the molded head of a female pillar-base figurine accompanied a ceramic fenestrated

incense stand. The household shrine room architecture revealed two phases. Residents modified its initial purely domestic nature by blockings doorways and constructing insulating walls or offering benches to create a more sacred space in its second phase. These apparently cultic structures and artifacts occupied women's workspace in the private Israelite house. Many household clay vessels and stone and bone utensils dominated the room. An oven outside the room, fish bones, and carbonized remains of grapes, cereals, and legumes indicate that this was a woman's food preparation and storage area. This Israelite house shrine at Lahav affords another excellent example of an incense-burning altar and a female figurine associated with a woman's work area (Willet 2000:10-11).

4.6.4.1.3 Summary of Israelite Women and House Cult

Israelite women baked in ovens in courtyards that opened onto the street. As in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, some women sought to protect themselves from forces that attempted to attack them and their children. They placed figurines that represented and invoked protective deities in front Kitchens or courtyards of their houses, near doorways that provided access to the roof and interior living and work areas. For example, figurines and clearly votive vessels came from front Rooms 94, and 443 and the remaining front half of House 25 including Rooms 25, 48, and 145 at Beer-sheba. Entrance Courtyards 36 at Beer-sheba, 314 and 42 at Tell Masos, and 440, 355, 327, and 436 at Tell el-Far'ah include elevated structures that may have served as offering places for house divinities. Figurines were found near most of these structures, especially at Beer-sheba and Tell el-Far'ah. For example,

excavators found figurines in the same loci as alcoves or benches in Courtyards 440, 355, and 327 at Tell el-Far'ah and in loci adjoining Courtyards 436 at Tell el-Far'ah, 36 at Beer-sheba, and 314 and 42 at Tell Masos.

In many cases, incense burners or lamps accompany figurines in Israelite houses to purify the house rooms from evil and to invoke protective deities. The lamps and incense burners take various forms: chalices, fenestrated clay offering stands, miniature votive lamps, normal lamps, clay models that represent the child-protecting goddess's lap, as well as small limestone incense altars. Depending on the time period, all of these occurred in Israelite living spaces with deity figurines and women's implements.

Overall, women managed Israelite household economies, but they were specifically responsible for food storage and preparation as well as clothing production. Women's other major contribution consisted in childbearing and education. Figurines and incense burners in rear broadrooms protected sleeping mothers and their newborn infants from mythological flying night demons. Rear storage and sleeping rooms at Tell Masos (307, 331, and 169), Tell el-Far'ah (442) and Tell Halif (G8005) contained evidences of household cult including incense burners or elevated offering structures that invoked deities who protected women and their infants while they worked and slept. Apotropaic amulets and accessories, especially in sleeping rooms, also testify to women's concerns with protecting their infants from child-stealing demons. For example, apotropaic jewelry accompanied incense burners and chalices in rear broad rooms of Tell Masos Houses 314 and 42 and Tell el-Far'ah House 442, and women's food storage and

preparation artifacts in several other rooms including Tell Beer-sheba casemate Rooms 63 and 66 and Courtyard 48 and Tell el-Far'ah Houses 440, 161, and 436. In each Lachish III house archaeologists found apotropaic jewelry and figurines among assortments of women's cooking and weaving tools.

These Israelite period houses at Lachish, Tell Masos, Tell el-Far'ah, Beer-sheba, and Tell Halif reveal the cultic artifacts and furniture which some Israelite women employed in protective household rituals. Family shrines and neighborhood cult rooms in the ancient Near East provide parallels that help to interpret the cultic structures, artifacts, and jewelry these Israelite houses exhibit.

The impression that we obtain from the artifacts seems to be different in several respects from what might be expected if the occupants of the houses obeyed the prescribed practices found in the Torah. There were the repeated commands in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21 to bind copies of the words of the law on the doorposts and gates. In later times, such a bound copy became known as a mezuzah. They were typically made of wood or metal in which there was an enclosed copy of verses from Deuteronomy. The writing would be expected to be on a perishable papyrus or kosher animal skin. Those copies would not be expected to survive. There is a relatively modern practice of enclosing the copies a container marked with the word "Shaddai" or the letter "Shin" signifying a shortened form of "El Shaddai" for "God Almighty." Although we do not have archaeological evidence, it seems that it would be likely that in the Iron Age, the householders who had portions of

the Torah affixed to their doorposts and gates, would be much less likely to rely on magic and heathen gods and figurines to guard the entrances to their houses(Willet 2000:12-14).

4.6.5 Temple in Jerusalem

Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem

In situ, archaeological research of the Jerusalem Temple area and immediately surrounding sections is almost non-existent due to the religious significance, cultural importance, and political sensitivity which the site holds for very diverse faiths and communities.

Tantalizing fragments of information or of misinformation have become known to scholars during the last 200 years. In 1838, Edward Robinson, and then in 1864, Charles Warren, began conducting various surveys and some measurements of the area. Both men showed considerable ingenuity in their work. The tight control by the Islamic Waqf of the Haram A'Shareef has precluded systematic research within the walled portion of the Temple Mount. See Figure 4.6-5 b.

4.6.6 Concluding Comments on Temples, Gods, and Cult Objects

A number of strong popular religions, were often given nearly free reign by the kings of Israel and Judah who only demanded the people's political loyalties. In Ahab's time (874-852 BCE), this included the near elimination of open

Yahweh worship and the establishment of Baal as the national deity (1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:4).

Local "high places" were promoted, with the king building shrines on them and appointing non-Levitical priests to officiate there (1 Kings 12:31). The prophets often pointed to these sacred places as the justification for the destruction of the nation (Amos 7:9 and Hos. 10:8). Standing stones (massebot) were erected on the high places as well as in the temple of Baal in Samaria (2 Kings 3:2). These slabs of stones marked the entrance to sacred precincts or represented the presence of the deity. They were so closely associated with Canaanite worship that Josiah singled them out for destructions along with the sacred posts (asherim), in his seventh century BCE reform movement (2 Kings 23:14).

Josiah's reform (2 Kings 23:4-24) actually provides a long list of Canaanite religious practices engaged in by the people of Judah. Idols and their priest were removed from the Jerusalem temple along with all cultic vessels and incense burners used in their worship. The Asherah, a sacred wooden pillar set up in the temple, was taken out and burned with its ashes scattered over a "potter's field" graveyard. A number of religious items were found in Jerusalem and other sites throughout Israel and Judah. Cult prostitutes were banished. The "high places" were abolished from one end of the land to the other (vs.7-8). Archaeologist have found a horned altar from the shrine at Beer-sheba (701 BCE) in a casemate wall. This gave evidence of an earlier attempt to eliminate the high places. In addition to these efforts to purify religion in

Judah, Josiah also eliminated a shrine in the valley of Hinnom which was being used for the sacrifice of children to the god Moloch (2 Kings 23:10).

The findings of pagan temples, shrines, altars, figurines, gods and cult objects discussed in this chapter attest to the history of the Northern Kingdom and Neighboring Lands. The Biblical references that have been presented provide some of the significant references to the religious practices of the Israelites and neighboring groups that influenced their lives.



a.

Iron I Incense Burners

b.



c. Iron I Shrine House
Beth-Shan (Stratum V)



d. Incense Burner

Figure 4.6-1



IRON II: A wide variety of clay figurines, quadrupeds and furniture models can be cited from numerous sites in the region. The female figurines vary in type, although the most common are those with arms folded below protruding breasts (pillared type). The pillared figurines are generally composed of two pieces, a head molded in a bronze mold and a clay body shaped like a pillar.

Figure 4.6-2



a. Four-Horned Altar at Beersheba: Sandstone blocks integrated into the walls of the storehouses were originally part of a four-horned altar. Three of the sandstone blocks preserved the shape of large horns typical of four-horned altars, while a fourth showed evidence that the horn had been broken off. Another of the stones bore the image of a deeply incised serpent.



b. Arad Israelite Altar. Only foundation stones ascribed to the altar from stratum XI remain, these have been incorporated into the stratum X sacrificial altar. This altar seems to have been constructed as a 5 cubit square 3 cubits height - as is instructed in (Ex 27:1). Again following Ex 20:25, it was constructed of uncut stones with a core of earth and clay. The top was flint with a channel for the blood of the sacrificial animal. All four corners had been broken off, which makes it impossible to know if this altar was horned following Ex 27:2 and Am 3:14.

Figure 4.6-3



a. ARAD TEMPLE: Inside the Iron Age fortress, archaeologists found remains of a temple used for several centuries during the time of the Divided Monarchy. Though worship centers outside of Jerusalem were forbidden by Moses (Deut 12), high places flourished throughout the land according to the Bible. The sacrificial altar is visible in the outer courtyard



b. ARAD TEMPLE Looking inside. The holy of holies debir of the Arad temple is small (1.2m x 1.2m) it contained two flint stelae with traces of red pigment - however any writing they may have supported was unreadable, there were also two small stone incense altars both found lying on the second step - both were flat topped, not horned.

Figure 4.6-4



a. High Place of Jeroboam: Nearly all archaeologists agree that this excavated podium was the one that Jeroboam constructed to house the golden calf at Dan. Archaeologists now think the platform was roofed. Evidence of a four-horned altar has been found as well as religious objects such as three iron shovels, a small horned altar, and an iron incense holder.



b. Temple Mount in Jerusalem

Figure 4.6-5

4.7 Metallurgy

4.7.1 Introduction

In order to understand more about the lifestyles and industries of the Iron Age, it is important to have some

information about the metals which were involved in the societies of Israel, Judah, and neighboring lands. Metallurgy includes the science and technology of metals. A complete survey of the metal availability and use would include the mining, extraction from ores and the preparation for use and transportation/trade in the bullion. Then a detailed study would include the actual uses to which the metals were put in ancient times.

The metals used by the people in the times of the Old Testament and during the Iron Age Period in Israel, Judah and neighboring lands included: copper, tin, bronze, iron, gold, and silver. Some of the references in the Bible that mention metals are:

The Lord was with the men of Judah. They took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had iron chariots (Judges 1:19).

Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, 'Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!' So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened (1 Samuel 3:19-20).

He [Goliath] had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing 5,000 shekels [78 to 156 pounds]; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed 600 shekels [about 15 pounds]. His shield bearer went ahead of him (1 Samuel 3:19-20).

Hiram's ships brought gold from Ophir... The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents [about 25 tons], not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the land. King Solomon made 200 large shields of hammered gold; 600 bekas [about 7.5 pounds] of gold went into each shield (1 Kings 10:11, 14-16).

Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god. This was the inventory: gold dishes 30, silver dishes 1,000, silver pans 29, gold bowls 30, matching silver bowls 410, other articles 1,000. In all there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along when the exiles came up from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7, 9-11).

There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore. Man puts an end to the darkness; he searches the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness. Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft, in places forgotten by the foot of man; far from men he dangles and sways. The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire; sapphires come from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold. Man's hand assaults the flinty rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains. He tunnels through the rock; his eyes see all its treasures (Job 28:1-6, 9-10).

Tarshish did business with you [Tyre] because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise (Ezekiel 27:12).

COMING OF "AGE"

It seems appropriate here to comment on the terms of the various "Ages" as labeled by archaeologists and anthropologists. Some of these are the: Stone (Neolithic) Age; Copper (Chalcolithic); Bronze and Iron Ages. But, these labels are rather misleading generalizations. When most people hear about one of these Ages, they naturally think that the name of the Age is derived from the type of predominate tool and weapon in use during that Age. But, of course the types of tools and weapons in use in one Age did not go out of use in the next Age. This is especially seen because Neolithic stone type tools were used into all future ages to some extent. Stone querns, saddle grinders and stone-headed maces are examples. Copper continued in

some use on into the Bronze Age as evident by the stronger tools and weapons. The most prominent examples of continuing use would be the use of Bronze tools, weapons, and artifacts generally predominating in the Iron Age. Once the new technologies came along for new and improved manufacture and availability of artifacts, the uses of older style tools and weapons might diminish and change somewhat, but their usefulness was not completely forgotten.

For the general public and many students, we might more usefully refer occasionally to these Ages as the "Coming Of Age of Stone Tools and Weapons," the "Coming of Age of Copper Tools and Weapons," The "Coming of Age of Bronze Tools and Weapons," etc.

4.7.2 Geological and archaeological evidence for the following metals: copper, tin, bronze, iron, gold, and silver

Copper

Copper (Cu) is a highly ductile and malleable metal. It was probably the earliest metal used inasmuch as it can be cold hammered. It can also be annealed, or tempered, by being softened in an open fire at about 500 degree C and then slowly cooled. Copper's melting point is 1083 degrees C. To smelt copper from malachite, a temperature of only 700-800 degrees C is sufficient. Egyptians of the 5th Dynasty (c. 2500 BCE) were able to obtain this temperature by blowing into pipes. Bellows were first developed in Mesopotamia and are not attested in Egypt until the 18th Dynasty (15th to 14th centuries BCE).

Copper occurs in carbonates such as green malachite and blue azurite. These ores were found in slate palettes by Egyptians from the prehistoric era for use as eye shadow. Copper also occurs in sulfides such as chalconite and covellite, and oxides such as cuprite and melaconite. In Canaan, copper was found at Tell Abu Matar near Beersheba.

One of the key sources of copper was the island of Cyprus. Copper's name, in Latin, "Cuprum," is derived from "Cypros," the Latin name of the island. Copper was found in abundance along the pillow lava layers of the forested Troodos Mountains located in the western side of Cyprus. These cupriferous sulphide ores yielded about 4 percent copper. This was extracted as early as the 18th century BCE. More than forty slag heaps totaling over four million tons have been identified. As three hundred kilograms of charcoal were needed to obtain one kilogram of copper, it has been estimated that over a period of 3,000 years, two hundred million pine trees were consumed in these endeavors (Millard 1973: 211-13).

The following is part of the translation from the Amarna letter EA 35, written from the King of Cyprus to Akhenaton, the pharaoh of Egypt in the fifteenth century regarding copper and silver. Although this inscription is much earlier than the time period of this dissertation the information allows us to have a better understanding of the significance that copper and silver had in relationship to the cultures discussed.

My brother, behold, my messenger I have sent with your messenger to you to Egypt. Now I have sent 500 talents of copper to you. (The talent is about 25 kg to

the Greeks. If the 500 refers to the flat four handled copper ingots current in the Late Bronze Age which weighed a talent each, the transport would have amounted to about 12.5 tons of copper.); I have sent it to you as a gift - for my brother. Do not let my brother be concerned that the amount of copper is too little, for in my land the hand of Nerga (Nergal: Mesopotamian sun god and ruler of the world of the dead. In his role as god of the midday heat he caused pestilences, wars and destruction. He was also god of health and fertility), my lord, has killed all the men of my land, and so there is not a (single) copper-worker. Therefore, do not let my brother be concerned. Send your messenger along with my messenger quickly and all the copper that you desire I will send you, my brother. You are my brother; you should send me silver, my brother - a great quantity (silver: compared with the later silver mines in Greece, Egyptian production of silver as an adjunct of gold was relatively small scale). Give me the best silver, then I will send you, my brother, all that you, my brother, request. Furthermore, my brother, the silver for which I asked you, let my brother send in great quantity. And, my brother, the gifts for which I asked you, send, and all my desires let my brother fulfill, and whatever desires you mention to me I will do (Muhly 1980:41).

Cyprus still remains a major source of copper. In the last sixty years, the island has produced a million tons of copper.

Other interesting ancient sources were the copper and turquoise mines of Western Sinai, especially at Serabit el-Khadim. These mines were worked during the Middle and the New Kingdoms (2000-1200 BCE). There Egyptian texts at the temple of Hathor record the presence of "Asiatic" (Semitic) miners who left behind very important Proto-Sinaitic texts with twenty-seven signs. These, along with contemporary Proto-Canaanite texts, were the precursors of the Phoenician alphabet, the fountainhead of all alphabetic systems.

Copper is found in some abundance in the Arabah Valley, stretching one hundred miles between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah (called by the Israelis the Gulf of Elat). Extensive copper mining and refining were conducted there from as early as 2000 BCE.

In the Timna area, as early as the 4th millennium, shafts and galleries were being used to extract the ores. The furnaces found in the area were cylindrical in shape, 24 x 24 inches. There were numerous examples of tuyeres, the ceramic tubes through which air was pumped into the furnaces by bellows (Tylecote 1981: 107-18).

Experiments have indicated that pot bellows as depicted in Egypt could be sustained at a rate of sixty strokes per minute for up to thirty minutes to obtain the necessary temperatures.

The early trading of copper, especially from Cyprus throughout the Mediterranean, is documented from early texts. The vizier Rekhmire under Tuthmosis III (15th century) reported the importation of 108 ingots of copper, "Bringing Asiatic copper, which his Majesty carried off from his (Syrian) victory in the land of Retenu, in order to cast two doors of the temple of Amun." Reliefs in Egypt also depict men from Keftiu (Crete) bearing ox-hide ingots of copper (ingots which take the shape of ox-hides) as gifts to the pharaohs. "Ox-hide" shaped ingots with Cypro-Minoan signs have been found as far west as the island of Sardinia (Yamauchi 1993:252-259).

In Crete, "Ox-hide" shaped ingots have been found at numerous sites including Hagia Triada, Mochlos, and Zakro.

They have also been discovered at Boghazkoy in Turkey and at Tell Beit Mirsim (Wheeler 1975:31-39).

Off the south central coast of Turkey, George Bass and his associates investigated the Cape Gelidonya shipwreck, discovered in 1960. This shipwreck is dated c. 1200 BCE. It carried a cargo of thirty-four copper ox-hide ingots, each weighing over fifty pounds. Also discovered were bronze tools, scrap metals and tin ingots (Throckmorton 1960: 682-703).

The earliest copper alloy was made with arsenic. It was probably obtained as a by-product of the smelting of copper sulfides. This was a product which was quite comparable to bronze in hardness and utility. Its main disadvantage was the hazard of arsenic fumes released in the smelting process.

In the Faynan District of southern Jordan, a well-preserved copper factory was discovered at the excavated site of Khirbat Hamra Ifdan. The material finds gave evidence that the factory had been active from the Early Bronze Age to the late Iron Age periods. The site is located about 31 miles (50 kilometers) south of the Dead Sea. This excavation was started in 1997 by T. Levy and R.B. Adams.

This discovery has provided valuable knowledge into metal production. The early Bronze factory collapsed during an earthquake and buried in the rubble were hundreds of casting molds for copper axes, pins, chisels, and bars. Thousands of stone hammers, crucibles, anvils, metal objects, and pieces of ancient metallurgical debris were uncovered. Dr. Levy made the following statement in an

article he wrote on this excavation, "By focusing on the role of copper ore and early metallurgy in social change from the Early Bronze period through the Iron Age, this UCSD [University of California in San Diego] field school will be the first "deep-time", diachronic study of craft specialization and social evolution in this part of the Levant" (Levy and Adams 2002: 425-427).

Tin

Tin (Sn = from Latin stannum; Greek kassiteros) is a soft metal, with a very low melting point (232 degrees C). Because it is a soft metal with a low melting point it was not useful in the making of artifacts. Tin is a very rare metal, occurring in only two parts per million of the earth's crust. Tin is found as cassiterite (tin oxide) in alluvial deposits in areas of granitic rocks.

Old Assyrian (early 2nd millennium BCE) texts of merchants in Cappadocia (eastern Turkey) speak of the transport of tin from Mesopotamia. Texts record that some 13,500 kilograms of tin were transported on 200 donkey loads from Ashur to Kanesh. Over a fifty year period, it has been estimated that about eighty tons of tin may have been shipped to the north from Mesopotamia (Wheeler 1977:23-27).

Cuneiform texts from Mari on the Euphrates recorded the storage of 500 kilograms of tin and shipments to cities such as Ugarit on the Syrian coast (Heltzer 1977: 203-11); Dan and Hazor in Canaan (Malamat 1971: 31-38); and Captara, i.e. in Crete (Yamauchi 1967: 29-30). Ingots of tin with

Cypro-Minoan marks were found off the coast of Haifa in Palestine (Wheeler 1977: 28-36).

The biblical reference in Ezekiel 27:12 to Tarshish may indicate that tin ores were obtained from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal). "Tarshish," which is a name derived from the Phoenician word for "smelter" according to W. F. Albright, may be identified with the Phoenician colony of Tartessus (Albright 1961: 346-47).

Though scholars have doubted an early expansion to the western Mediterranean prior to the 8th century BCE, F. Cross has recently identified a Phoenician inscription from Nora in Sardinia as coming from the 11th century (Cross 1979:103-05). This raises the possibility that the Tarshish ships of Solomon may also have traveled to Spain (Blaklock and Harrison 1983: 419-22).

James Muhly has argued that for the Late Bronze Age the Mycenaean Greeks obtained tin overland from Brittany in northwestern France and Cornwall in southwestern England. There is certainly evidence of trade overland in amber obtained from the Jutland area on the Baltic Sea for this period.

Bronze

True bronze, an alloy of about 10 percent tin and 90 percent copper, was developed in some areas (such as Crete) after about 3000 BCE. In other areas (such as Canaan and Egypt) it did not develop until after 2000 BCE. Such an alloy has a lower melting point than copper, and makes a more fluid melt for casting. The *cire perdue* (lost wax) process was used to make many bronze cultic figurines.

Bronze was also much harder than copper. For this reason it was effectively used for making weapons, farm implements and other tools.

Iron

Iron (Latin, "Ferum") is one of the most common of elements. Iron is found in such ores as dark red hematite, yellowish brown limonite, and black magnetite. Unlike copper, iron cannot be cold hammered. Iron ore can be reduced at 1100 degrees C, but its melting point is 1540 degrees C. Such temperatures were not achieved until the development of blast furnaces c. 1400 A.D., which were able to render iron in liquid form for casting. The earliest iron was probably a byproduct of copper smelting, as copper ores almost always contain iron. Chalcopyrite, for example, contains about thirty percent iron. When iron ore was smelted, what would be produced would be a spongy mass of iron, slag, and cinders which have to be hammered to remove the slag and air bubbles. This was so-called wrought iron. Wrought iron was forged while still in its heated, soft, and ductile state.

Anthony Snodgrass has proposed that the eastern Mediterranean world turned to iron, not because of its superiority, but because the disturbances of 1200 BCE so disrupted international trade that supplies of copper and tin were unreliable or unavailable. During the first two or three centuries after 1200 BCE, bronze continued to be used for utilitarian purposes, though iron with its hardness and strength was used increasingly for weapons and agricultural implements (Snodgrass n.d.: 368).

Iron working is mentioned frequently in Hittite texts (14th to 12th century BCE) of Anatolia. Classical traditions (Herodotus, Xenophon, Strabo) localized ironworking in northern Anatolia. The Black Sea coast has self-fluxing iron sand, which is eighty percent pure magnetite. Self-fluxing iron sand contains elements which promote the fusing of the metal when it is heated. Other scholars believe that the Levant took the lead in developing iron technology. Texts from Alalakh in Syria refer to a batch of 400 iron swords. A fine example of iron technology is an axe blade in a bronze hilt found at Ugarit dated to 1400 BCE. Iron is also mentioned three times in Ugaritic texts (C. Fensham, "Iron in the Ugaritic Texts," *Oriens Antiquus* 8 (1969), 209-13). Ironworking was then developed c. 1200 on Cyprus, from whence it spread to the Aegean. In Canaan, there were relatively few iron sources. An iron mine at Timnah in the Arabah dates back to 1100 BCE. There has been a supposition that the Philistines imported iron and developed a monopoly on ironwork in Israel from early iron age (1200 BCE) until they were conquered by King David about 1000 BCE. This theory has been based on the following scripture mentioned before,

There was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, 'Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears;' But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock" (1 Samuel 13:19-20).

What is interesting to realize in these verses is nothing specifically mentions ironworking and since the tools found in the Israelite sites of this period are made of bronze the verse is relating to metalworking in general terms.

At Beth-Shemesh, which is located close to Philistia, there was found in Stratum III ovens and furnaces of the bronze industry along with Philistine pottery (Aharoni 1979b: 156). There was no substantial archaeological evidence for the widespread diffusion of iron in Philistia in the early Iron Age. In Ashdod, the only Philistine capital that has been extensively excavated, iron implements were not found from the early Philistine strata. At Tel Qasile, the only evidence of Iron in the early strata (XII) was an iron blade with an ivory handle found in the Temple. This shows that iron was regarded as a precious and rare metal. In the temple of stratum X, there was an iron bracelet, showing the new metal was rare and costly, used in rare occasion for jewelry. (Aharoni 1979b: 156). At Tel Sharuhen (el-Far'ah, South) there was an iron knife and dagger with a bronze grip found in a tomb that was early Iron age and at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh there were more iron weapons. Tests that have been done on iron artifacts from Philistine sites do not show a consistent pattern of carburizing the iron. It seems that the scripture reference in 1 Samuel 13:19-20 is implying that the Philistines were technologically superior to the Israelites in all metal working and were able to control access to the metals and the technology (Dothan 1982:20,91) (Muhly 1982:54).

Agricultural iron objects have been found at numerous Israelite sites including Tell el-Ful (ancient Gibeah), Saul's capital, where an iron plow was discovered. The Old Testament mentions eighty-three bronze weapons as against only four references to iron weapons. It was only in the

10th century that iron weapons became more numerous than bronze weapons (Yamauchi 1993:252-259).

One of the earliest examples of carburized iron or steel is a pick, which was discovered at Mt. Adir in Galilee in 1976 (Davis 1985: 41-51). This dates to the 13th to the 11th century BCE. Until men learned to carburize iron, that is to add a certain percentage (0.7 to 2.0 percent) of carbon, wrought iron was inferior to bronze. Carburization was achieved by heating and reheating the iron in a charcoal fire. This steel was then further processed by heating and then quenching it in water. The supremacy of iron over bronze was not a sudden or a swift development. As A. Snodgrass concludes,

Certainly the old statements, often made in a deterministic vein – that the arrival of iron weapons explains the success of ancient conquests and migrations, that iron precipitated the decline of Egypt, and so on – seem today quite unjustified" (Wertime 1980: 368).

The increase of iron objects was noted from the excavated sites starting with the tenth century. These included Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza and Ekron. See in this dissertation about Weapons and Warfare in Section 4.8 and about Farms and Equipment in Section 4.10 for more information on the use of metal in making implements.

Gold

Gold (Latin aureum, Greek chrysos), which is the first metal named in Scripture (Gen. 2:11), is a relatively rare metal. Gold occurs in so-called "reef" gold, formations in veins, and as alluvial (in water-borne sediment). Most ancient gold was derived from the latter. Other gold

mining deposits were extracted from sand, gravel, clay, or silt.

The largest supply of gold in antiquity was that obtained by the Egyptians from Nubia, the area to the south of Egypt. These fields were to be found in three main areas: (1) the gold of Coptos (Wadi Hammamat, Wadi Abbad), (2) the gold of Wawat (Wadi Allaqi, Wadi Cabgaba), and (3) the gold of Kush (from the Nile Valley between Wadi Halfa and Kerma).

In Nubia there are remains of more than 100 ancient Egyptian mines. The Egyptians sent some shafts to depths of nearly 300 feet in trying to extract reef gold. Their galleries extended up to 1500 feet into the hillside. The ores would be crushed with mills, and then washed with water. Gold was refined through the process of cupellation. Gold melts at a temperature of 1063 degrees C. To extract gold, the ore would be heated in a cupella of clay with lead. The resulting dross of oxides would be absorbed by the porous cupella, leaving the nearly pure deposit of gold.

The Mereruka relief depicts goldsmiths blowing through long tubes to melt the gold, with others weighing and recording the gold. The dazzling gold metalwork of Egypt is most notably illustrated in some of the objects from Tutankhamen's tomb, discovered in 1922. His solid gold sarcophagus weighed 243 pounds. It has been estimated that there may have been a total of 400 pounds of gold objects in his tomb.

The constant theme for Egyptian gold was recorded in the Amarna Letters. See section in this dissertation on

Inscriptions 4.5. Such letters were court correspondence written to Amenophis III and his son Akhenaton by the contemporary rulers of the neighboring Near Eastern kingdoms. The following are partial translations of this correspondence related to this desire for Egyptian gold.

Amarna Letter EA9 is a letter to Naphkhuria (Akhenaten Nefer-khepru-re) from Babylon by Burnaburiash, king of Karduniah (Babylon). Note that one "mine" was about half a kilogram, about 19 oz.

Now, my brother has sent me only two mines of gold. But this is a very small amount: send, then, as much as your father did! And if you have little (gold), send half of what your father sent! Why have you sent me only two mines of gold? My work in the houses of the Gods is abundant, and now I have begun an undertaking: Send much gold! And you, whatever do you need from my land, write and it will be sent to you.

Amarna Tablet EA 17 is from Tushratta, the king of Mitanii. The abundance of gold in Egypt was internationally known. Tushratta, the king of Mitanni, in northern Mesopotamia, wrote to Amenophis II of Egypt (14th century),

Send gold quickly, in very great quantities, so that I may finish a work I am undertaking, for gold is as dust in the land of my brother. Tushratta, the king of Mitanni Send gold quickly.

Because Mesopotamia was devoid of gold sources, it had to import gold (Maxwell 1977: 83-86).

The reality of the gold of Ophir, which Solomon imported, has been confirmed by an ostrakon found at Tel Qasile with the phrase, "Ophir gold for Beth Horon, thirty shekels." We are still not certain where Ophir was. Suggestions include east Africa, west Arabia, and India.

Solomon was not the only king who boasted in his gold. Assyrian kings speak of walls "covered with gold like plaster." An Assyrian king, Sargon II, seized six golden shields from Urartu, each weighing twelve times the weight of the shields Solomon hung in his palace (Millard 1989:29).

Silver

Silver (Latin *argentum*; Greek *arguros*) is most plentifully found in galena, the principal ore of lead (Lead, Latin *plumbum*) became especially important for the making of pipes (Boulakia 1972: 139-44). Lead sulphide ores will yield thirty to 300 ounces of silver per ton. Silver's melting point is 961 degrees C. In the roasting process the sulfur is eliminated as sulfur dioxide gas.

The Hebrew word "keseph" was used for silver or for money. See Weights and Measures, chapter 4.9 in this dissertation. The later Old Testament books such as Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles refer to coins which may be interpreted either as the Persian gold darics or the Greek silver drachmas.

4.7.3 Concluding Comments on Metallurgy

Metals were mentioned in several places in the Hebrew Scriptures. The smelting furnaces used for the processing metal were found at a number of excavated sites. The supremacy of iron over bronze was not a sudden development.

The increase of iron objects was noted from the excavated sites starting with the tenth century BCE. These included Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza and Ekron. The Hebrew Scripture mentions eighty-three bronze weapons as against

only four references to iron weapons. It was only in the tenth century BCE that iron weapons became more numerous than bronze weapons and used by Israel and their neighbors in battle. Agricultural iron objects have been found at numerous Israelite sites including Tell el-Ful (ancient Gibeah).