

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has undertaken the task of surveying the archaeological sources which elucidate the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and neighboring lands from the time of King Omri (876 BCE) of Israel to the Assyrian Exile (721 BCE) of the people of that Kingdom. This history is found in the Hebrew text, from 1 Kings 16:16 to 2 Kings 17:6.

The events which occurred during this time are some of the most interesting and important in the history of the Hebrew people. They help us to understand much of the sociological and religious concerns which are expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In order to understand more fully how archaeological sources can illuminate the history of the Iron Age II, it is necessary to briefly look at the various categories of sources.

An important part of this survey was the study of the portable artifacts that have been discovered, identified and published from the excavated sites. These artifacts were discussed according to their type or function.

Several different types of artifacts have been found which were involved with uses in: the home; agriculture; religions; warfare; trade and commerce and the arts. The section on pottery was the most extensive and detailed because the morphology of pottery is a key to determining the periods of occupation of most levels at the majority of sites.

Another significant portion of this research was the survey of the actual sites which are scattered across the Levant from Turkey in the north to the Sinai Peninsula. Going inland from the Mediterranean Sea there are sites of interest as far as the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers and beyond over into Persia. Several specific sites are discussed in considerable detail. Over the last three millennia, many sites were forgotten, except for their names as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Some were also known from a few other ancient literary sources. Within the last 200 years, scholars and adventurers have identified hundreds of ancient sites. Many of these sites have been excavated. Some of the early excavators and scholars made tentative identifications of sites which later have turned out to be incorrect. But these individuals deserve credit for trying and for making educated conjectures at the time, often with very limited and imperfect information. Large basically immovable artifacts, such as fortifications, buildings and walls, were discussed.

The findings from this survey have been massive, which speaks highly for the amount of archaeological research which has been conducted of this time period. Taking this into account, key information can be used to develop a synthesis of the history of the relevant period. We turn our attention to some of the most significant kings that are mentioned in the Hebrew text based on the historic time of this dissertation.

Omri (885-876 BCE) moved the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria (1 Kings 16:23-27). In the excavations of Tirzah (Tell el-Far'ah), Stratum III showed the city had gone through numerous repairs and one building was left

unfinished. This has been interpreted to mean that Omri started to rebuild the city after its destruction and then aborted the plan, presumably when he turned attention to the mountain top of Samaria. The Stratum I palace was part of Omri's building phase, it was not completed.

Omri was known from the ancient inscriptions. On the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, the inscription read, "Tribute of Iaua (Jehu), son of Omri." This is despite the fact that Jehu was not a biologic son of Omri, but rather a successor to the throne.

The Moabite stone discovered near ancient Dibon in Jordan recounts the deeds of King Mesha who ruled Moab during the ninth century BCE. He is mentioned in 2 Kings 3:4-27 and his inscription refers to Omri, king of Israel, whom he fought against. It is written in the Moabite script which has a close affinity to the Hebrew script. This valuable artifact emphasizes how Mesha relied on Chemosh, the main god of the Moabites, to help him win victory over his enemies. One part of the inscription that reflected on Mesha's victory over Israel read, "I took from there the altar-hearths of 'Yahweh' and I dragged them before Chemosh." This is perhaps the earliest inscription reference to Yahweh, the name of God in the Hebrew texts. That sacred name was inscribed in the Moabite language on this stone about two hundred years before it was recorded in mid-sixth century BCE Hebrew on the now famous silver "amulet" found in a tomb on the western shoulder of the Hinnom Valley of Jerusalem. The Moabite Stone showed the military strength and great international significance of Omri.

Ahab was the next king of Israel (876-853 BCE). In 1 Kings 16 through 22, whole chapters are devoted to Ahab's life, the understanding of which has been greatly enlarged by archaeological activity at Samaria. The palace uncovered at Stratum II dated to the time of Ahab. From its ruins, it appears to have been elegant, massive and effectively defended. Large numbers of ivory inlay pieces, intricately carved and probably manufactured in Phoenicia, were discovered in the debris. Whether paneling for the wall or decoration for furniture, the houses of ivory, based on a highly sophisticated Phoenician ivory industry, were for the Hebrew prophets symbols of social oppression and injustice (1 Kings 22:39 and Amos 3.15).

Assyrian records also testify to the virility of Israelite political life in the time of Ahab. The Monolith of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE) from Kurkh refers to Ahab "Aja-al-bu of Siril" (Ahab of Israel) as one member of a coalition of twelve kings headed by Hadadezer of Damascus (as "Adad-idri of Damascus", the biblical Ben-hadad II) who fought at the battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE. At that time Ahab reportedly provided two thousand chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers as mentioned in the cuneiform account. It mentions in 1 Kings 16:29, "Ahab the son of Omri." This Monolith of Shalmaneser III confirms Ahab by name. The Bible does not refer to the battle of Qarqar, but this monument supplies information regarding Ahab's personality, military strength and international relationships. Stables for horses were discovered at Megiddo which dated to Ahab's construction.

Ahab's wife, Jezebel, was a royal personage and perhaps a priestess of the Tyrian Baal deity and the Asherah.

Figurines recovered from Ugarit, Megiddo and Lachish depict Baal as a powerful warrior whose cult-animal was the bull, typifying the power over fertility. The sensuous Baal cult challenged Israelite worship as was shown in the event on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18) and was uniformly condemned by the prophets, especially Elijah and Elisha.

Because of the wicked rule of the "house of Omri," the prophet Elijah understood that God sentenced Ahab, Jezebel and their descendants to death. He would use a general of the Israelite army, Jehu, to accomplish most of these sentences. The Hebrew text says that God told the prophet Elijah, "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha . . . you shall anoint as prophet in your place" (1 Kings 19:15-16). God would not allow the enormously wicked acts of the House of Omri to go unpunished.

Jehu was the next ruling king of Israel (841-814 BCE). In general, the building structures of the Omride-Ahab period remained in use during the time of Jehu. They were repaired and occasionally expanded with less careful construction and masonry. There is little evidence of royal or public building programs, certainly nothing to compare with those of the Omride period. The administration of Jehu and other kings of his dynasty were attested to by ostraca uncovered at Samaria.

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria, includes scenes depicting the tribute given to the king. In the second scene from the top the inscription reads, "Tribute of Iaua (Jehu), son of Omri. Silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden beaker, golden goblets, pitchers of gold, tin, staves for the hand of the king, (and) javelins, I (Shalmaneser) received from him." This elaborate illustration is the earliest known depiction of an Israelite (king or commoner). This monument can be found in London's British Museum.

"Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel. However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan. In those days the Lord began to cut off parts of Israel; and Hazael conquered them in all the territory of Israel. . ." (2 Kings 10:28-32). In the excavation of Dan, a structure was discovered which was identified as the bamah which stood at the center of the religious enclosure associated with the worship of Jeroboam's golden calf. In addition to, this several other structures and artifacts related to cultic worship during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE were uncovered.

Israel's next king was Menahem (743-738). The Hebrew text refers to Menahem in 2 Kings 15:14-22 it records that Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver. In a stele of Pul (in Assyrian Pulu or Tiglath-Pileser III), a list is given of tributary kings. Among them appears "Menahem of Samaria" (Me-ni-hi-im-me al Sa-me-ri-na-a-a). This stele was discovered at the central palace of Nimrud (Calah) and is presently at the British Museum.

There is also a quartz Hebrew seal in the Israel Museum inscribed with the words, "Belonging to Menahem."

Jehoash followed Menahem as Israel's king (814-798 BCE). His reign overlapped with that of Adad-nirari III (810-783 BCE). A stele of the Assyrian King Adad-nirari III, records that Jehoash (Joash) of Israel paid tribute to him.

Israel's next kings were Pekah (738-732 BCE) and Hoshea (732-723 BCE). The text of 2 Kings 15:29 reads, "In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria came and captured . . . and Hazor and Gilead." The excavations at Hazor have uncovered traces of the capture and destruction of the city in 732 BCE by the Assyrian monarch Tiglath-Pileser III. Israel's archaeologist, Yadin concluded,

Tiglath-Pileser razed to the very ground the city of Hazor, once a key stronghold of the northern kingdom of Israel. The sight we encountered in area B [site of the citadel] is worse than any I can remember in archaeological excavations. The entire area was covered by a layer of ashes 1 meter thick and still black. Everything in sight was broken and scattered on the floors of the houses. We could visualize the Assyrian soldiers roaming about the houses, looting whatever they could and destroying the rest. The fire was so violent that even the stones were black, and numerous charred beams and pieces of burned plaster from the ceilings were strewn all over. The eastern side of the citadel; from which the fort had been attacked was destroyed so thoroughly that in some places only the foundations below the floor level were visible (Camargo 1984: 106).

In spite of the sacking, the excavators found a multitude of household objects abandoned by the Assyrians,

among them cosmetic pallels and other artifacts indicating the wealth of Hazor's people.

The degree to which heathen practices had contaminated Israelite worship was attested to by a large number of figurines pertaining to the rites of Baal and Astarte.

The scripture as presented stated that Tiglath-Pileser also conquered Gilead. Another limestone relief from Nimrud showed the capture of Astartu in Gilead by Tiglath-Pileser III. Astartu is shown as a walled city on a tell.

In 2 Kings 15:30 there is mention made of "a conspiracy against Pekah." In Tiglath-Pileser Annals, it is said that it was "the people" of Israel who deposed of Pekah, and that he, Tiglath-Pileser, appointed Hoshea as king. This seems to indicate that the conspiracy against Pekah was most likely plotted with Tiglath-Pileser associates, for he had already invaded Israel and deported a large number of its inhabitants (2 Kings 15:29). The Assyrian text reads, "The house of Hu-um-ri-a (Omri) . . . all his people, and their goods, I sent away to Assyria. They overthrew their king Pa-qa-ha (Pekah) and I made A-u-si (Hosheah) king over them. I received from them ten talents of gold, a thousand talents of silver as tribute and I carried them away to Assyria." This appears to be an important verification of the Hebrew text. Pekah's name was found on a jar from the level at Hazor which was destroyed by the Assyrians.

Archaeology has also elucidated the history of Judah that related to the time period of this dissertation. The king of Judah that ruled from 781-740 BCE was Uzziah. In 2

Chronicles 26:23, it is stated, "And Uzziah slept with his fathers." A stone plaque was discovered in the Russian church of St. Mary Magdalene, situated on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. It bears the Aramaic inscription, "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah King of Judah. Do not open." This Second Temple inscription appears to reflect a reburial of his bones.

Jotham was king of Judah from 740 to 736 BCE. In 2 Kings 15:32 there is mention of "Jotham the son of Uzziah." In the excavations at Ezion-Geber (Eilat), Glueck found a seal with the figure of a ram and the inscription, "Belonging to Jotham." Because of the dating and location of this seal it appears possibility to be that of Jotham.

The king of Judah from 736-716 BCE was Ahaz. One tablet contains an account of the building programs and military campaigns for the first 17 years of his reign. It states that he received tribute from "Jehoahaz of Judah." This is the full name of Ahaz (2 Kings 15:29). "Ahaz the son of Jotham" is referred to in 2 Kings 16:1. A seal, evidently from the time of this king of Judah was found. The inscription reads, "Belonging to Ashna, servant of Ahaz."

It is recorded in 2 Kings 17:6 that "the king of Assyria captured Samaria". It was Shalmaneser (727-722 BCE) who took Samaria, but it was his brother and successor, Sargon II (721-705 BCE), who completed Israel's subjugation and deported its inhabitants. In an Akkadian inscription on a stone slab found at his palace in Khorsabad, Sargon calls himself "conqueror of Samaria (Sa-mir-i-na) and of all Israel (Omriland, bit-Hu-um-ri-a)." In one of his prisms, uncovered in Nimrud, he gives details of this conquest,

"The man of Samaria and a king who was hostile to me, had joined together to refuse homage and tribute to me, and came out to fight with me; by the help of the great gods, my lords, I overthrew them; I captured 27,280 persons with chariots, their gods in whom they trusted, and took as my royal share of the booty 200 chariots. I gave orders that the rest should be settled in the midst of Assyria."

The Prism of Sennacherib contributes considerable information about the manner of Assyrian warfare. "Sennacherib . . . came up against all the fortified cities of Judah" 2 Kings 18:13. One of Sennacherib's inscribed prisms, known as The Taylor Prism, describes this campaign, which was carried out in 701 BCE. After telling of his military operations in Judah and Philistia, he goes on to say: "As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered them by means of well stamped ramps and battering rams combined with the attack by foot soldiers. I drove out of them 20,150 people. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. His town which I had plundered, I took away from his country and gave them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron and Sillibel king of Gaza." He also mentioned that he took tribute which included gold, silver, precious stones, furniture inlaid with ivory and musicians.

Another important battle by Sennacherib was his conquest of Lachish. It is recorded in 2 Kings 18:14. A famous stone mural, found in the ruins of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, represents in detail the assault and capture of Lachish along with the deportation of its

survivors. From these inscriptions we have a vivid picture of the cities, methods of Assyrian warfare, material culture and people that greatly enhances the understanding of the Hebrew text. This attack on Lachish was also evident from the excavation of Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir).

Another important contribution of archaeology to the time period of this dissertation was the Aramaic inscriptions that gave insights into the dating of the Syrian kings. This helped to solve the problem of an apparent conflict in the Hebrew text about three battles with Ben-hadad as well as with the Elisha stories. That is, if the stories of the three battles with Ben-hadad actually pertain to the last years of Ahab (the king of Israel is killed in the third story) and the Elisha stories actually pertain to Jehoram's reign, then we have a Ben-hadad on the throne of Syria followed by Hazael (2 Kings 8:7-15) rather than a Haddezer followed by Hazael.

One significant answer to this problem that upholds the historical context is to conclude that Ben-hadad and Hadezer were the same person. Presumably the Assyrians knew him as Hadadezer, while the Israelites knew him as Ben-hadad. The Aramaic form of "Ben-hadad" which appears in the Zakir and Melqart inscriptions is "Barhadad."

These ancient Near Eastern inscriptions show that Israel and Judah are not fictitious names. They also mention a selection of kings known in the Hebrew scriptures. They show the succession of the kings, and occasional synchronisms between the kings of Israel and Judah and the Assyrian kings that are essentially sound.

The next subject that pertains to the value of the material culture in relationship to understanding this historic time period is the non-textual sources. Although much of this has already been woven into the above chronology of the kings, the following is a summary of this subject. From the excavations of the sites there is a definite indication of general trends in national security and prosperity. Israel seems to have enjoyed its prime during the ninth century, for example, as suggested by the impressive buildings, city walls and water supply systems at Samaria, Megiddo and Hazor. Less impressive building and fortification remains from the eighth, seventh and sixth centuries BCE, along with occasional indications of general city destruction, suggest economic decline and national insecurity. The ninth-century BCE remains would represent the post-Omride period when Israel's prosperity surpassed that of Solomon's day. Accordingly, the eighth, seventh and sixth-century BCE remains would represent post-Omride decline hastened on by Syrian, Assyrian and Babylonian invasions.

Other biblical sources also provide data relevant to the history of this period of the divided kingdoms. For example, the prophetic books of Amos, Jonah, Hosea, and Isaiah provide considerable insight into the life and times of the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. All of these prophets addressed the political and spiritual situation of their day and sought to persuade their countrymen of what they regarded to be the divine course of affairs. Through them came glimpses in their warnings to the people of Israel and Judah and some other nations. These

denunciations provided insight into socio-cultural matters that related to domestic and international affairs.

In closing, a final note is important to be emphasized. This survey of the archaeological sources shows the value of these various artifacts and sites. These provide us with tangible connections with sociological and religious aspects of the past. Modern writers and translators of the Hebrew Scriptures have been able to take advantage of the wealth of information which is now available from archaeology proving the practical value of it.

This survey was intended to provide information so others can use it to understand and know the material culture of this very important time period in biblical history found in 1 Kings 16:16 to 2 Kings 17:6.

The sources which have been discussed in this dissertation help us to understand the different groups of people of that time period. We can learn how the so-called elite people, the rulers and the movers and shakers of society lived. The sources also reveal some of how the common folks lived and worked.

The author of this dissertation trusts that it will provide a basis for individuals to learn about, appreciate, and enjoy the rich trove of archaeological materials which can be used by scholars and layman to illuminate the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and neighboring lands.

Archaeology remains as a science that is producing new finds in current excavations. Reports are being written

more speedily than before. Considerable collaboration is underway with scientists in other fields. Valuable new methodologies are being developed and used that will contribute new information from fields such as the smallest radio-isotope and atomic spectral analysis which may determine the provenance of artifacts to the analysis of slightly larger DNA helping in determining genetic relationships between generations of people and also animals. Computer assistance and analysis is proving invaluable in handling the increasing volume of data from excavations and from the laboratories. Various electronic means are being used and improved to try to visualize subsurface features by placing instruments on the ground surfaces. Perhaps the largest scales involved in archaeology are in the use of aerial and satellite imaging. This includes satellite radar probes for subsurface geological and manmade features. The U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) and the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) of satellites help in precision location and relocation of sites for later excavation. These systems have helped archaeologists travel through trackless wildernesses. However, such unique and new methods of data collection and analysis often lead to the need for more excavations and the use of small tools in the willing hands of devoted individuals to uncover additional artifacts.

Work by archaeologists and other scholars' remains to be done. Improved speed of analysis and timely publication of results are needed.

