Palestine was always a very poor country, but at the same time it was a land bridge between continents. As such it was also one of the most important regions through which ancient caravans and trade routes crossed and met each other. All direct communication by land between Arabia and the Mediterranean world had to pass through or near Palestine. Palestine was a link connecting such wholly different civilizations as those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Semites and the South Africans. In Palestine we find samples of many kinds of culture. There are imported objects as well as objects left at a site by some one of the many different cultures which succeed one another in this country. The late Clarence Stanley Fisher, who was for many years associated with the University Museum of the University of Penn- sylvania, excavated in Iraq, Egypt, and else- where, used to say that he preferred to dig in Palestine because it was only in Palestine that he could take sixty years to excavate a site. For example, one day he might find an Egyptian stela, the next day he might dig up a cuneiform letter. Another day he might find objects belonging to a Philistine garrison which had come from the Aegean and brought many elements of foreign culture with it.

But Palestine is even more important than one might infer from such a glimpse. It was also the land of the Bible. Bible lands extend from Spain and Southwest Africa to India, from South- west Russia to the Indian Ocean, a tremendous span of space as well as in time. But Palestine remains the home of Israel and the place where most of the events of the Bible took place. The Old Testa- ment is a unique historical monument which is far older than anything else preserved through ancient and medieval transmission to modern times. The oldest parts of the Old Testament are much earlier than anything in Greek litera- ture, even the Homeric epics. The Israelites wrote with extraordinary attention to historical detail. Until we reach Thucydides we can see in Greek literature anything comparable to the Old Testament writing in this respect. It is, however, rather difficult to be long debate about the degree of its historicity. How is the Old Testament? Of course, from one point of view all the Old Testament is his- torical because all of its parts are historical, a situation, a situation in which its authors lived.

I am, however, referring more specifically to events which had to do with the Hebrew people, the nation Israel, and the heroes and leaders of Israel in antiquity. Here we have an unparalleled opportunity to test the reliability of oral and written tradition, usually only from manuscripts of the Middle Ages, beginning in the fourth century A.D.

Without insisting on the historical character (in a pragmatic sense) of every statement in the Old Testament, we can say with confidence that archaeology is fully demonstrating its reliability as an historical source. Prof. E. A. Speiser of the University of Pennsylvania called attention a number of years ago to the fact that in a few cases where the historical sources and the Assyrian sources refer to the same events, the exist- ence is generally more accurate. President Nelson Glueck of Hebrew Union College in Cin- cinnati and the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City, one of the most distinguished Palestinian archaeologists, has repeatedly spoken of the "extraordinary historical memory" of the Israelite people. Of course we would not go so far as to say it is impossible to make any such judgment walk on all fours. There are exceptions, cases where oral tradition was at fault and the written account is correct. The case is particularly true of the early part of the transition period between Paleolithic and Neolithic. These discoveries we owe to Jean Perrot and Moshe Stiekel, who have found a fishing village in the Jordan valley (not far from the remains of Zin- jantropus) as well as another village south of Carmel. The remains of small houses of Eynan (a fishing village north of the Sea of Galilee) con- tain remains of successive human settlements which must have lasted a good many years. These phases may have followed each other in rapid succession, but we have to reckon with decades, perhaps even with generations for the location of which the course of the river was no longer what it had been, Mount Carmel was partly devoted to farming, on a primitive scale to be sure, like the coeval remains examined at first at Eynan by Yigael Yadin. It is also possible that even such early human settlements were relatively small, with hundreds of people living in reasonably stable communities (about 10,000 years ago, according to radiocarbon evidence).

We call it "early pottery Neolithic" or the "beginning of pottery Neolithic" which has been discovered in Jericho by Kathleen Kenyon and north of Petra by Diana Kirkbridge. In the past few years Pre-Pottery Neolithic settle- ments have been found in Greece and Asia Minor, on Cyprus, and as far east as Pakistan, so there can no longer be any doubt that the Neolithic Old World was a rich one. The earliest Neolithic village with pottery and flourishing Neolithic culture which contained fine walled towns as well as villages— all without any pottery. Turning to historical periods in the strict sense, I can refer only to a few outstanding ex- cavations during the past few years, since the number is increasing rapidly and many small undertakings are extremely important. I shall mention only the work at Hazor, Shechem, Gibeah, and Jericho. At Hazor, Yigael Yadin dug for several years, and discovered parts of the most extensive walled city yet found in Palestine, covering something like a hundred acres. Yadin estimates that at the rate of prog- ress of this excavation during those four years it would take him 1,000 years to complete the work. But I have to add: 1,000 years have now passed without excavation there and so at the rate of work since the beginning of 1955 we should have to estimate the duration of the whole excavation at 1,600 years! Hazor is a very large site and in places very deep, with re- mains extending from the Early Bronze Age (or earlier) down to the Persian period; there was a...
cal Archaeology in the University Museum) has recently returned from his latest season at this site with extremely interesting and important results. Gibeon was also a place of great importance in the history of Israel and yet very little was understood about its history, and references to it were sometimes explained in diametrically opposite ways by different scholars. Pritchard's work has made it certain that Gibeon was indeed occupied in the days of Joshua, but that it was much less important than the later editor of Joshua (probably writing in the seventh century B.C.) supposed. Presumably this editor was influenced by the impressive location and size of later Gibeon. Gibeon is one of the first Biblical towns in Palestine to yield absolutely certain proof of its correct location, since dozens of excavated jar handles bear the name "Gibeon," with other details showing that the wine which was stored in the jars upon which inscriptions are found, actually came from Gibeon. Many other interesting discoveries have been made at this site, which now becomes one of the most important sites to be dug by Palestinian archaeologists. Since 1961 Kathleen Kenyon, after many campaigns of excavation at Jericho, has turned to Jerusalem itself, where she has been carrying on extremely interesting and successful excavations. For the first time completely modern scientific method has been introduced into this ancient city, at least on a large scale. Her discoveries are now clearing up many puzzles and obscurities in the history of the city.

Finally we shall discuss the use of pottery for dating Biblical history. I shall take up the following illustrations: (1) fixing the date of Abraham by Nelson Glueck's explorations in the Negeb of Palestine; (2) the date of the conquest of Canaan by Israel under Joshua; (3) the character of the building operations of Solomon; (4) the destruction of the cities of Judah by the Chaldeans in the early sixth century B.C.; and finally (5) the dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

During Nelson Glueck's remarkable explorations in the Negeb of Western Palestine since 1953, he has found a large number of Middle Bronze I sites, which have subsequently been traced almost to the frontier of Egypt proper by Beno Rothenberg. All these settlements were dated to this period by their pottery. (If one prefers to use Miss Kenyon's terminology one may call this period Early Bronze-Middle Bronze.)
any case, this pottery is very distinctive and can virtually never be confused with pottery from any other period in Palestinian history. This phase of the period dated roughly between 2000 and 1800 B.C. It was almost invariably found in sites where the earlier pottery culture was all that occurred. Near many of these sites there were unquestionably important caravan routes which made them an important place to be connected with trade, and especially with the caravaneers who organized the great donkey caravans which were such a feature of Western Asia in the late third and early second millennia B.C.

If we turn to the Book of Genesis we see that Abraham’s activities were connected with trading centers and trade routes; he is explicitly said to have lived in Gerar or Hebron near the southern edge of the hill country of Palestine and to have spent his time during the ninth century between Egypt and Palestine. Without going into too much detail, it may be said that the traditions regarding Abraham fit beautifully into the situation recovered by Nelson Glueck and first connected by him with Abraham. I myself have recently done a considerable amount of work on this problem, incidentally proving that the term “Hebrew” meant originally “donkey caravaneer.” The question will, of course, be debated in the future, but new evidence accumulates there will be, I am sure, less and less doubt about the main outlines of the picture. I do not think that we understand the career of Abraham far better than we did, and his date may be set with considerable confidence in or about the nineteenth century B.C.

It is not until after the conquest of Canaan by Israel in the time of Joshua. Since the Hebrews are first known to have been in Palestine in the time of Abraham, about the nineteenth century B.C., it is unlikely that there was any century of the second millennium during which the Hebrews did not make some step toward occupying Palestine. The main phase of the conquest, which was associated by Hebrew tradition with Joshua, has been dated all the way back into the thirteenth century B.C.

Among the towns mentioned as captured by Joshua are Jericho, Lachish, Bethel, Debir, Hazor, and many others. We have a list of thirty-one towns captured by Joshua in the twelfth chapter of the book which bears his name. The list itself is of late date; it includes not only towns taken by him but also other towns which were brought into the tradition by a sort of snowballing process, attributing more and more to Joshua. However this may be, it is quite clear that Biblical tradition places Joshua a little after Moses. Archaeological research proves that the significant destruction and following change of culture in these towns during the latter part of the Late Bronze Age, between the fifteenth and the twelfth century B.C., took place in the middle or later decades of the thirteenth century.

In the present context it is necessary only to mention the events in the period from the fifteenth to the twelfth century B.C. In the thirteenth century, beginning with the work of Yadin at Hazor, we find the evidence of the destruction of Gerar (stratum X) beyond any reasonable doubt and found the same kind of building remains. Yadin then went to Megiddo and made soundings there which showed that the American excavators had made certain mistakes in their conclusions, and that all these sites, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer, had city walls of the same casemate type, city gates with the same six bays, and other similar features in common. Furthermore, Nelson Glueck, in his work Tell el-Mutesellim, found a similar mud-brick gateway and copper edifices with pottery of the tenth-nineteenth centuries B.C. His work there convinced him, as it has most archaeologists, that this was Biblical Edom, where the fleet of Solomon started its journey down the Red Sea to ancient Ophir.

The nature of the events described in 2 Kings are certain, but which has often been debated in recent years, some distinguished scholars going so far as to deny the historicity of Biblical traditions. It can be the conquest of Judah by the Chaldeans. However, excavations in the towns of Judah proper (not including those towns which were outside the northern or southern limits of Judah, and which had an independent history in the early sixth century B.C.), have shown that all of these sites were destroyed and not reoccupied immediately. In fact, as noted above, all excavations have yielded the same result, proving in the most clear-cut fashion that the radical critics are wrong and that there actually was a thorough devastation and depopulation of Judah at the time of the Chaldean invasions under Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. There were three main events in Judah’s history that, in sequence, are 597, a second in 587, and a third in 582; but the destruction of 587 was the most important. This dating is established by inscriptions, including the famous ostracon of Lachish, as well as by the overwhelming evidence of pottery. North of Judah proper, the territory of Gilgal and Pithom (Tell el-Mutesellim, excavated by Bade) was outside the limits of the kingdom of Judah in the sixth century B.C., when these cities belonged to the Babylonian governor of Samaria.

Finally, we should say something about the Dead Sea Scrolls. When these Scrolls were first discovered by Bedouin in 1947, the Bedouin took quite a bit of pottery, and in 1949 the original cave was discovered near Khirbet Qumran. The vessels were at once dated to the Hellenistic-Roman period, but there was some fluctuation in detailed dating. For instance, there was a brief period during which the excavators were inclined to date the cave occupation—in other words, the pottery which was found there—to the first century B.C. That was theoretically possible, so far as one could judge from the shape of the jars, but as soon as I saw the texture of the first of these jars which came to this country, I recognized that it could not possibly go back earlier than the Roman period, since there was a very abrupt change in the texture of pottery in the first century B.C. and the end of the same century. From then on the texture of pottery became what we call Roman—a brick-red texture, quite different from that of earlier Hellenistic pottery. Much more pottery has since been found in the adjacent settlement, the monastery of Qumran. Now we have not only the pottery of the first cave, but also a great deal more, which has been beautifully classified and dated by Paul Lapp, now director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. All of this pottery can be related to other similar pottery from Palestine and neighboring Syria and is tied with the aid of coins. Hundreds of coins were found by Father de Vaux and his associates in digging the site of the monastery at Qumran and the settlement below Qumran, just above the present shore of the Dead Sea. Dating by coins has confirmed the earlier dating by pottery, which, to judge from the evidence of paleography, i.e., by studying the script of the manuscripts and comparing it with the script of other written remains from the last centuries B.C. and the first centuries A.D. In short, wherever we can check we have full agreement between the evidence of pottery, of inscriptions, and of historical events in the earlier times, except where we have mixed debris, or where there is a precious object that may have remained in use for a long time, we can virtually always find complete agreement between dating from inscriptions and dating from pottery found in the same contexts. We are not entering a new period in the archaeology of Palestine as well as in the historical understanding of the Bible. These two disciplines must work together; separately they lose a great deal of their value.