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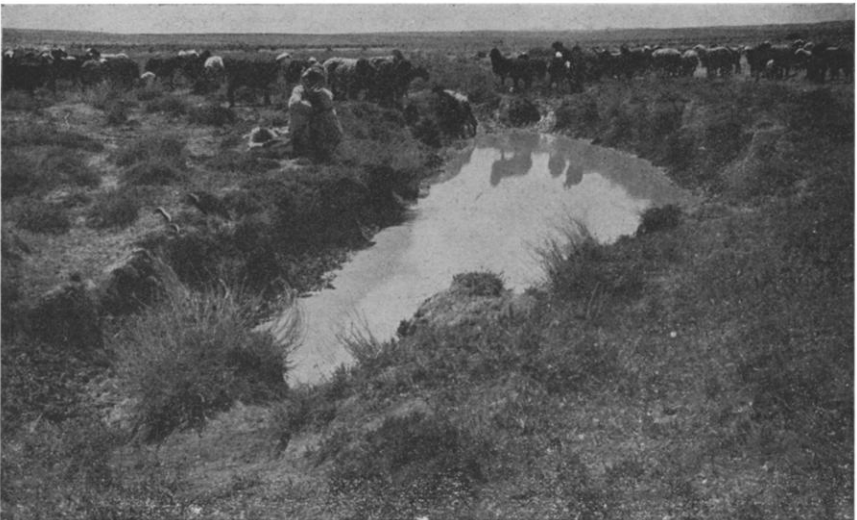


Fig. 1. Rain pool in a hollow in the Transjordan desert, east of Muwaqqar. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

TRANSJORDAN

Nelson Glueck

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Let us journey westward from the eastern fringes of the Transjordan desert to that part of the Promised Land now known as Palestine. At any other time but Spring, it is bare and brown, or, where miles of flint

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and basalt fragments cover the surface, it is blinding black in the glare of the sun. There are great stretches of almost flat tableland, other areas swept by gentle undulations like the surface of a placidly rolling sea, and some sections studded with weird hills twisted by the elements into wild formations. Nowhere, however, is the desert of Transjordan completely or always empty of life, to be accounted void and valueless.

When the rains fall in winter and spring even in these rigorous regions of marginal and waste lands, the earth produces with awakened ardor. Plant life flourishes, giving sustenance to flocks and thus a livelihood to herdsman and their families. The uneven economy of entire tribes is as dependent upon the desert with its seasonal grasses and shrubs as the fortunes of the fellahin, the farmers, are caught up with the cultivation of more friendly fields, however subject these too may be to the vagaries of nature.

I have wandered in the desert of Transjordan in springtime after the rains were over, and have seen it green and gay with billowing grasses and succulent shrubs, and glorious with masses of gleaming wild flowers. "For lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come." (Song of Songs 2:11,12)

And almost immediately then Bedouins and their tents and flocks appear. By their tens and hundreds, according to their families and tribes, do these nomads and other semi-nomads erect their encampments, and move them in accordance with the condition of the pasturage and the availability of water. With the rains every hollow holds a pool of water (Fig. 1.), and every depression becomes a reservoir. When the desert was dominated by the dynamic Nabataeans and Romans, great walls were sometimes built across narrow wadi necks (Fig. 2), and even flash floods impounded to provide water for large flocks for many months of the year.

These encampments serve as centers from which the herds go out to graze and to which they return in the evening replete from pasture. The nightly milking done, the milk is boiled, and throughout the following days the women of the tribe are much concerned with preparing butter and butter-fat and butter-milk and cheese.

I traveled once in the month of March by camel along the length of the Wadi Arabah (Fig. 3), much of whose arid wastes, extending between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah, remain fiercely unfruitful even in the felicitous spring season. We had ridden long one day, lolling dully in our saddles, as the camels filed with cushioned tread along forlorn tracks. At dawn we had already finished the dregs of water from the

sorry skins our Arab companions (Fig. 4) had brought along as water-containers, and by the late afternoon we suffered much from thirst (Fig. 5). Finally, towards the end of the day, we reached Feinan, which is plentifully watered by a perennial stream descending from the hills of Edom. We made halt by an Arab encampment along its outskirts. Hardly had we caned our complaining beasts to a kneeling position, when an Arab woman—the men seemed to be all away at the moment—came out to meet us, bringing a bowl full of sour milk. Deep draughts and our thirst was banished! The nomads who frequent the Wadi Sirhan, and others like them, live for months on practically nothing but camel's milk.

It would seem certain that when the Israelites had reached Punon, as Feinan was anciently called, they too were hospitably received. It is most probable that some of the Kenites, into whose tribe Moses had

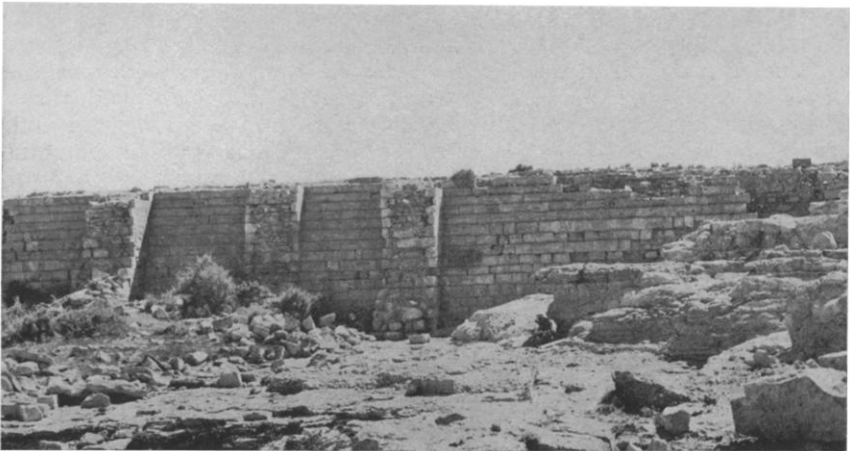


Fig. 2. Roman dam in Wadi Dhobai in the Transjordan desert. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

married, tented there, and that they, who were also miners and copper- and iron-smiths, worked some of the nearby copper and iron mines. The Israelites learned the skills of mining and metallurgy from them. Furnaces¹ and slag-heaps and fragments of pottery testify to such mining and smelting activities there in the time of King Solomon, and to settlement there also at the end of the Early Bronze Age. En-route to the Promised Land from Egypt, the Israelites had reached Punon via Elath, on the north shore of the eastern arm of the Red Sea, not far from where subsequently Solomon's sea-port and industrial center of Ezion-geber was established.²

Wherever water was available, permanent settlements were established during widely separated periods of history in the Wadi Arabah at such places, for instance, as Punon or et-Telah. At the latter site, the gifted Nabataeans impounded surplus waters and cultivated with extraordinary

1. BA I. 2, Fig. 1

2. BA I. 3, pp. 13-16; II. 4, pp. 37-41; III. 4, pp. 51-55.

energy large stretches of marginal lands. No one since their conquest by the Romans in the 2nd century A. D. has emulated their dynamic example there.

THE EASTERN DESERT

Even in the eastern desert stretches, tent-dwellers have always known how to fatten their flocks on its seasonal bounty. I believe the Biblical

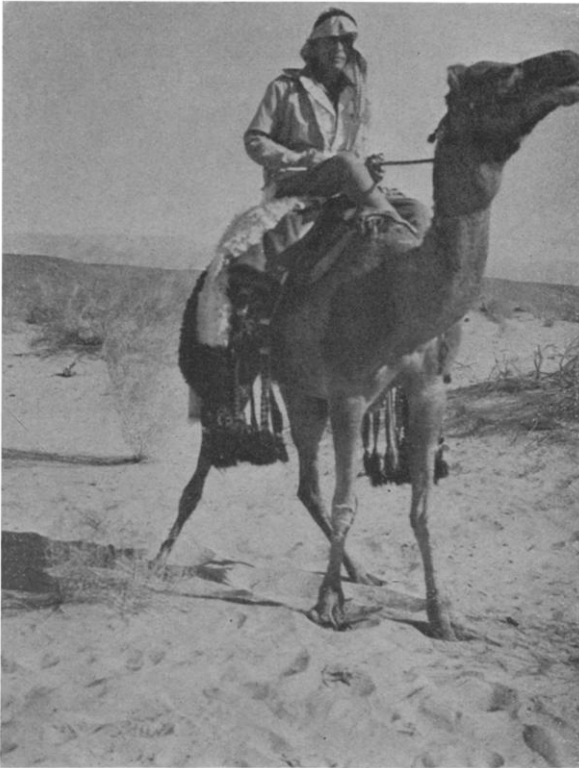


Fig. 3. The author, Dr. Glueck, in Wadi Arabah, near Jebel Hamr Ifdan.

accounts to be true which tell how the Israelites went through the desert east of Edom and Moab, having failed to secure permission to use the central "king's highway" traversing their length.³ It could have been done, however, only in spring-time when water and pasturage were abundant. And it was probably an especially rainy, long awaited spring-time, when report reached the tribal elders that the going through the desert east of Edom and Moab was particularly good.

3. BA III, 3, p. 37; VI, 4, pp. 68-69.

The sophisticated 8th century A. D. Umayyad princes built luxurious hunting lodges in the desert of eastern Transjordan, and spent pleasant periods there in spring-time when game was abundant, faring forth to the chase at dawn and returning at dusk to dine and be merry (Fig. 7). But thousands of years before their time and long millennia before the Israelites

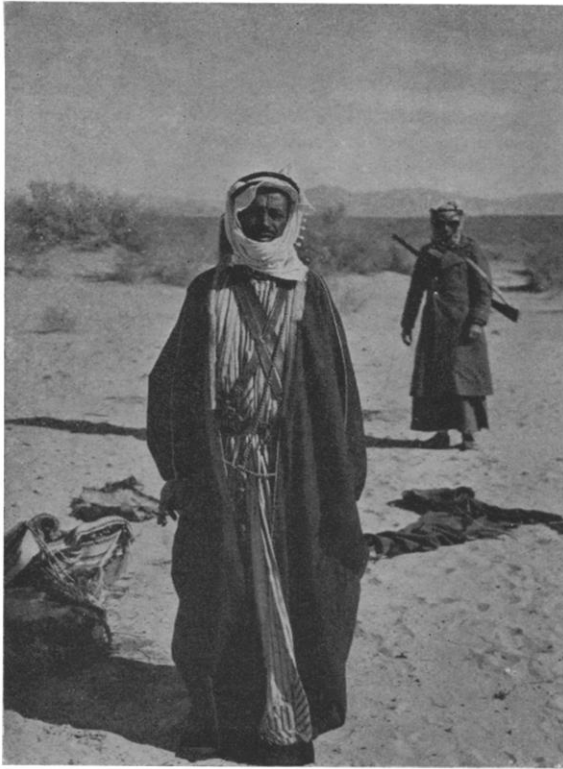


Fig. 4. Sheikh Audeh ibn Jad. Behind him is a member of the Arab Legion. Looking toward Jebel Harun (the Mount of Aaron), a traditional site of the burial-place of Aaron. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

appeared upon the scene, the desert was peopled particularly in spring-time, and large quantities of worked flints at innumerable sites testify to the presence of prehistoric nomads there. In the spring of 1944, the British Resident (now British Minister Plenipotentiary) in Transjordan, Mr. (now Sir) A. S. Kirkbride, took me to a great prehistoric site a few hundred yards from Qasr Kharaneh, one of the Umayyad castles which decorate the desert in Transjordan. And on this prehistoric site, we picked up numerous Palaeolithic (Early Stone Age) flints of excellent workmanship.

And still farther east, in the Wadi Sirhan, the long, shallow depression which marks the easternmost edge of Transjordan, and which extends southeastwards from Azraq in northwestern Transjordan to within 10 miles of Jauf in north-central Arabia, nomads and their flocks can be encountered in considerable numbers in the spring months of the year. There is a comparative plenitude of water throughout the other seasons too.

The Wadi Sirhan merges almost imperceptibly with the flint and basalt covered desert which leads down to it ever so gently from the Transjordan side. Only northeast and east of it are there ranges of hills, from which there is a marked descent to it. The Wadi Sirhan is a wadi only in the sense that it is an extensive catchment basin for rain and run-off waters. On



Fig. 5. Ain Beweirdeh, one of the few watering holes in the Wadi Arabah. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

the whole, it is so flat that one can ride about in it in an automobile at fairly high speed. I have witnessed the unsportsmanlike chase of gazelles by car in the northern part of it.

Rainwater runs off the southern slopes of the Jebel Druz which is north of the Transjordan desert, and off the eastern slope of the Transjordan watershed. Much of it collects in the marshes and lake of the Azraq depression, located at the northwest end of the Wadi Sirhan. Dominating it are the ruins of a large mediaeval Arabic fort and caravanserai (which replaced an earlier Roman-Byzantine one) with a modern police-post and fort of the Arab Legion nearby. Azraq was the end-station of the caravan route which leads along the Wadi Sirhan from Jauf en-route to Syria.

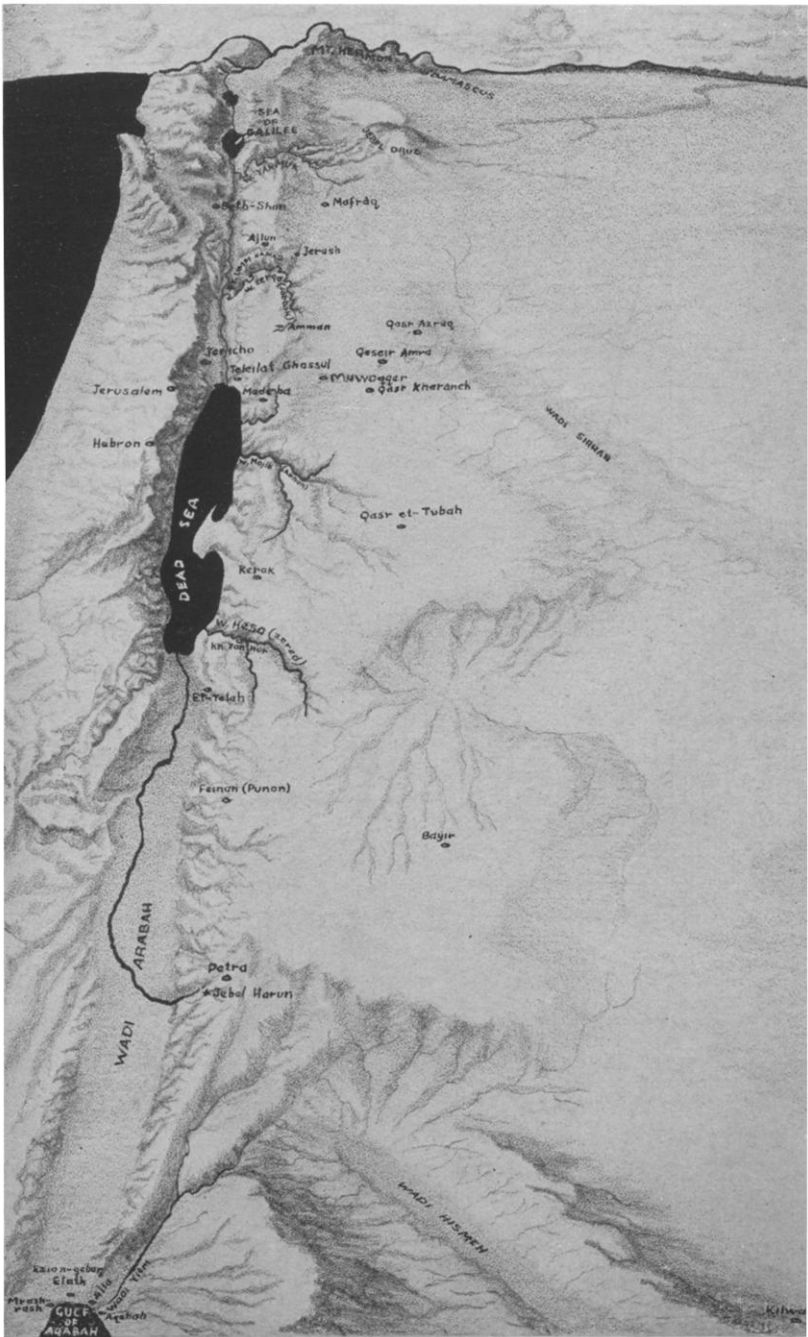


Fig. 6. Sketch map of Transjordan on which may be found the sites and wadis mentioned in this article. (By Richard C. Snyder, McCormick Theological Seminary)

Some of the rainwater flows subterraneously in the Wadi Sirhan, emerging in several swampy (*sabkhal*) areas aside from the Azraq one, and at various water holes along its length. About 25 kilometers southeast of Azraq in the Wadi Sirhan is the *sabkhal* area of Amri, measuring some 5 square kilometers in extent. In numerous places the underground water wells up to the surface, and elsewhere it is possible to find water by digging down less than half a meter, sometimes breaking through

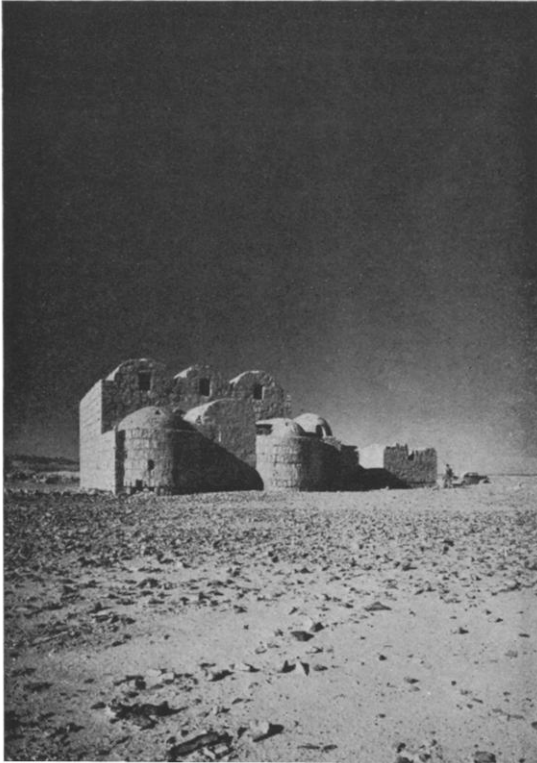


Fig. 7. Qeseir Amra, an 8th century A. D. Umayyad hunting lodge in the desert of eastern Transjordan. (Photo Government of Palestine, Dept. of Antiquities)

an overlapping layer of limestone rock (Fig. 8). From ancient times on, caravans have made Amri a halting place, before continuing the journey northwestward through the Wadi Sirhan or turning off westwards towards Amman or Madeba by the route that passes by Qasr Kharaneh and Muwaqqer. When we arrived at Amri, we found herds of camels grazing and being watered there. It is easy to understand why this apparently forbidding looking region was of particular importance, to the Nabataean kingdom for instance, connecting as it did two widely separated spheres of Nabataean domination, namely northern Arabia and southern Syria.

It is also understandable why Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, King of Sa'udi Arabia, holds firm control of the Wadi Sirhan, being fully cognizant both of its economic and strategic value.

In the northern part of the Transjordan desert, particularly in Nabataean-Roman and Byzantine times, energetic settlers built permanent stone houses and towns in the desert, which is bleak at all times of the year except in the spring. By virtue of great ingenuity and unending



Fig. 8. Water-hole at Amri in the Wadi Sirhan. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

effort they established a thriving sedentary life there. Examine a map and look at the regions north of the Iraq Oil Company pipe-line which runs between Mafraq in northwestern Transjordan eastward to Iraq, and try to picture an empty desert area, where today only a couple of very small permanent settlements, aside from oil pumping stations, exist. Yet during the first five centuries of our era, there was a considerable number of thriving and important settlements there, distinguished by strong stone houses and temples and churches. Large reservoirs were hewn out of solid rock and were made water-tight with facings of small stones tightly cemented together with lime cement, or simply faced with several coatings of lime covering. In addition, almost every house had a large square or rectangular covered cistern, whose stone roof was supported by arches resting on pillars. The water from the winter and spring rains was caught, led through covered channels into settling basins, and thence into cisterns.

and reservoirs, furnishing thus the only water supply available for the entire year. This water supply sufficed for the needs of a population numbered by the thousands in contrast to the meager tens and hundreds that squat in and around these sites today. Among the most famous of these Nabataean-Roman and Byzantine settlements is the high site of Umm el-Jemal, with its Nabataean and Greek inscriptions, and its remains of Nabataean buildings and subsequent Byzantine churches (Fig. 9).⁴

The physical characteristics of the Wadi Sirhan are surprising to one who is accustomed to the topography usually associated with the term *wadi*, which is roughly equivalent to our *arroyo* or *canyon*, or some times, stream-bed. The extremely shallow Wadi Sirhan is nothing at all like the great depression of the Wadi Arabah, which is bordered by towering and forbidding heights on either side of it, or like any of the great canyons with perennial streams at the bottom of them, which cut westward across the breadth of Transjordan. The Wadi Sirhan is really an extension of the Transjordan desert to the west of it, and merges imperceptibly with it, being distinguished from it mainly by the fact that there are some water-holes distributed along its length.⁵

THE HIGHLANDS OF TRANSJORDAN

From the western edge of the Wadi Sirhan the Transjordan desert rises very gradually to the watershed, which runs along the length of the east central part of Transjordan. The line of this watershed is marked approximately by the line of Umayyad castles of Qasr Hallabat, Qeseir Amra, Qasr Kharaneh, Qasr et-Tubah, and the Nabataean post of Bayir. West of this line, the land slopes down westward very gradually, changing from more or less featureless, desert plateau-landscape to rolling hill-country, wooded, watered, fruitful and farmed, and then plunging steeply down to meet the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and the Wadi Arabah. A similar abrupt drop occurs at the south end of the Transjordan plateau to the Wadi Hismeh, which is a weird, hill-studded desert stretching below the Neqb Shtar and continuing into Arabia (Fig. 10).

The highlands of western Transjordan, cut into separate sections by the great canyons of the Wadi Yarmuk, Wadi Zerqa, Wadi Mojib, and Wadi Hesa, the latter three known, respectively, in Biblical times as the Nahal (River) Jabbok, Nahal Arnon, and Nahal Zered, have been inhabited by sedentary dwellers from earliest historical times on. These are fair lands which have supported flourishing agricultural civilizations for certainly the last seven thousand years. The moisture laden winds blowing west over Palestine bring much rain to Transjordan in season, in addition to the tremendous quantities of moisture which are deposited there from the precipitation of the evaporation of the waters of the Dead Sea.

4. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. No. 96, pp. 7-11.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-17.

In Biblical times these natural segments of the fertile highlands of Transjordan were occupied by the kingdoms of Edom and Moab, by the two Amorite kingdoms of Sihon and Og and by the Ammonite kingdom. Their boundaries shifted at various stages of history, but their houses and cities and walls and cisterns, their pottery and monuments and inscriptions and tools and jewelry remain to testify in part to past glories. After the advent of the Israelites, and their conquest of the Transjordan kingdoms, the two and a half tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh occupied the territories of Sihon and Og, that is, the areas extending between the Arnon and Yarmuk rivers, with the Jabbok in between. That conquest, however, took time. When the Israelites first arrived, and

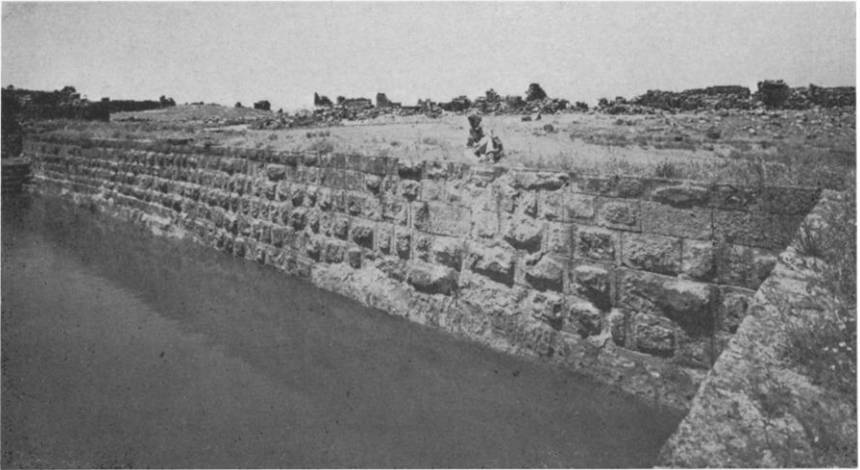


Fig. 9. Reservoir at Umm el-Jemal, first built in Nabataean-Roman times, and still sufficiently water-tight to hold the seasonal rain water, although the site itself has for centuries been empty of inhabitants. (Photo Government of Palestine, Dept. of Antiquities)

attempted to pass through the central part of Transjordan, they found the way barred by the forts, towns and soldiery of the established kingdoms of Edom and Moab, which extended particularly from the southern edge of the high Edomite plateau, marked by the Neqb Shtar to the River Zered, and from the River Zered to the River Arnon, both of which empty into the Dead Sea. Being refused permission to pass through these territories, they were compelled to go around them through the desert to the east — the desert that has been described above.

There were strong fortified cities in those kingdoms, and some of them continued to figure in history for centuries and millennia later on. Such a city, for instance, was the capital of the kingdom of Moab, anciently known as Kir-hareseth, and now known as Kerak. Practically nothing is left of the original city, on whose city wall the king of Moab once sacrificed his son to the Moabite god, Chemosh, when the city seemed in imminent danger of being captured by the Israelite and Judean armies led by Jehoram of Israel. The attackers were repulsed. Built on top of

a high, almost impregnable, hill Kir-hareseth secured its water through an almost vertical tunnel pierced through the hill tapping a spring. The massive castle which now crowns the hill is one of many structures there that in the course of time have impressed nomads as being "fortified up to heaven." It is Crusader in origin, but is now largely in ruins (Fig. 11).

Long before the Israelites appeared upon the scene to wander through the desert and break their way through to the Jordan, the fertile highlands of Transjordan were occupied by sedentary settlers, who intensely farmed the rolling agricultural areas, and even spilled over into marginal lands,



Fig. 10. The Wadi Hismeh. From Negb Shtar at the south end of the Edomite plateau. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

particularly on the slopes leading down to the Jordan Valley. More than 5000 years before the time of Christ, a dynamic people known as the dolmen-builders were settled in the hill-country of Transjordan and Palestine, and along the slopes leading down to the Jordan River. These dolmens can still be seen by their hundreds in Transjordan, where there has been less destruction of antiquity sites than in Palestine. These dolmen-builders lived apparently in separate farms houses, rather than in settlements and villages, and they have left behind them as enduring memorials the massive tombs they built out of huge slabs of rock for the final resting places of their dead (Fig. 12).

From their time on, and sometimes in widely separated periods, others have farmed the fertile soil of the western part of the Transjordan plateau. And in recent years the archaeological survey of the American School of Oriental Research, Jerusalem, has discovered Chalcolithic sites of the fourth millennium in the hill-country of Transjordan with pottery of a type that has hitherto been found only in lowland places, such as Teleilat Ghassul in the Plains of Moab at the northeast end of the Dead Sea. Furthermore, in the hill country of Transjordan, there has been discovered early third millennium B. C. band-slip ware of Early Bronze I-II, of a type hitherto found previous only in the Jordan Valley, or other related lowland sites.



Fig. 11. Crusader castle of Kerak. View of the east side. (Photo Government of Palestine, Dept. of Antiquities.)

It is now possible to say definitely that these early cultures which have hitherto been thought to belong exclusively to extremely fertile, usually irrigated, lowland or valley sites, existed also in the highlands. Wherever there was water and good soil, sedentary settlers soon established a foothold even in the hill-country of Transjordan, however thickly they may also have settled at the same time in such fertile lowland areas as the Jordan Valley: in such sites, for instance, as Teleilat Ghassul on the east side of the valley, and in Jericho, Tell Umm Hamad Sherqi and Beth-shan (Beisan) on the west side of the Jordan Valley.

The long, narrow, rectangular area of the western part of the highlands of Transjordan has been the scene of the rise and fall of many

highly advanced sedentary civilizations. The richest part of the plateau has been perhaps in the northern plains of this rectangle, extending between a line which may be drawn on the map eastward approximately from Beisan and continuing northward to the edge of the plateau overlooking the steep descent to the Yarmuk River. It is in this area that much Early Bronze I-II band-slip ware has been found.

In this area, and in the areas of the Transjordan plateau to the south, the nearer one comes to the western edge of the plateau overlooking the

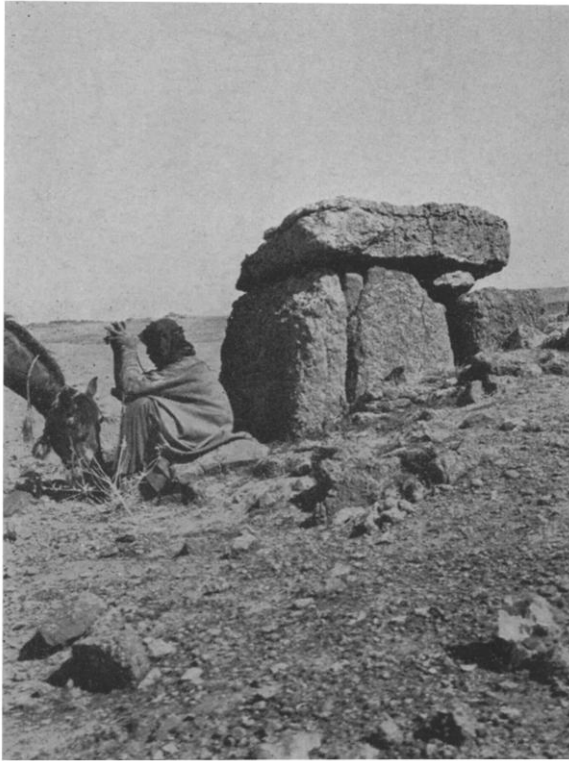


Fig. 12. A dolmen or tomb erected by nomads in Transjordan about 5000 B. C. Overlooking the "Plains of Moab" in the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and the Wadi Arabah, the deeper become the wadis which cut their way westward to these depressions, the steeper and more rugged the slopes which lead down to them, and the more hilly the highlands above them, with a consequent lessening of the areas available for intensive agriculture. In addition to the main perennial streams flowing westward in their ever deepening canyons, the land becomes cut up by wadis leading generally from the north and the south down to the major east-west wadis, such as the Wadi Yarmuk, Wadi Zerqa (Jabbok), Wadi

Mojib (Arnon), and Wadi Hesa (Zered). The casual tourist may be easily misled with regard to the nature of much of this wadi-cut hill-country, if he happens to see it in late summer when the main harvest is over, or if he travels through stretches which have purposely been left fallow by the cultivators. The latter work on a two or three year rotation scheme, cultivating only one half or one third of their lands each year in those areas where they have not yet learned to use natural or artificial fertilizers extensively, and where a system of one major crop followed by a minor crop (thus wheat followed by durra) prevails.



Fig. 13. Main thoroughfare in Roman Gerasa. (Photo Government of Palestine, Dept. of Antiquities)

To the north of the Wadi Zerqa (River Jabbok) and to the east of Gerasa (Fig. 13), one comes to the heavily wooded hills of the Jebel Ajlun, where one can ride for hours in the shade of thick pine and oak forests. There towers the great mediaeval Arabic castle of Qal'at er-Rabad (Fig. 14), a short distance west-southwest of the village of Ajlun, situated in the center of an ancient iron-mining and smelting region. Qal'at er-Rabad is a landmark from afar. It commands a magnificent view over the hills and slopes which lead down to the Jordan Valley, and can be seen from most of east central Palestine. And even in this still heavily wooded area, wherever there is a very strong spring of water, our archaeological survey expedition has found sites, anciently occupied, some of which go back to the very beginning of the Early Bronze Age, i. e., to the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third millennium B. C.

The hill-country of Transjordan, contained between the Wadi Yarmuk to the north (which is approximately the boundary between Transjordan and Syria), and the Wadi Nimrin or, as it is also known, the Wadi Sha'ib to the south (which, roughly speaking, is located on a line which may be drawn east from a point a little north of Jericho), including the Plains of Moab at the northeast end of the Dead Sea, is bordered on its west side by the Jordan Valley. As has already been pointed out in the *Biblical Archaeologist* (Vol. VI. 4), I consider this valley to be one of the richest parts of all Palestine or Transjordan. It is dotted with ancient settlements of agricultural civilizations dating from the 6th millennium B. C. on.

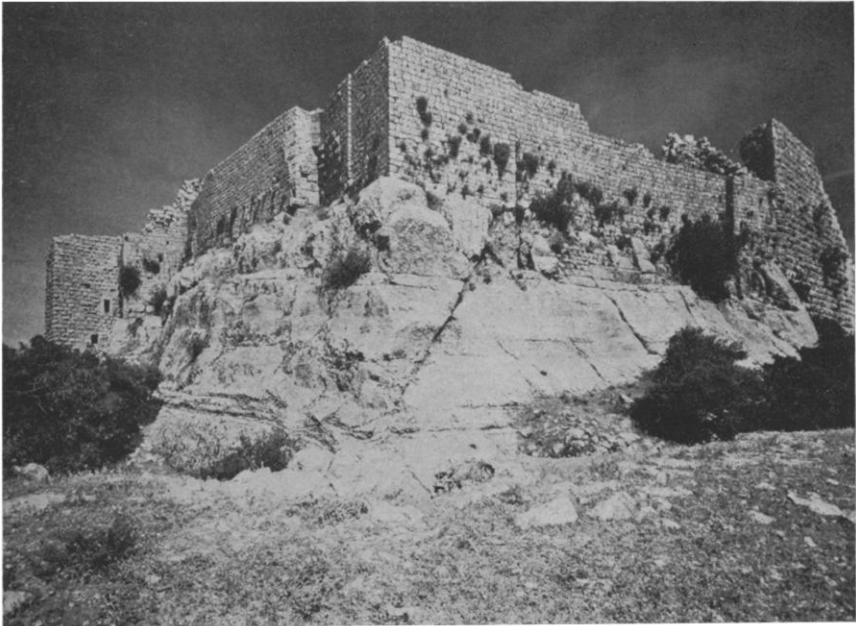


Fig. 14. Qal'at er-Rabad above Ajlun. Built by one of Saladin's emirs in A. D. 1184, destroyed by Mongol invaders in A. D. 1260, rebuilt shortly thereafter by Sultan Baybars, and occupied as late as the 19th century by Ibrahim Pasha. (Photo Government of Palestine, Dept. of Antiquities)

The civilizations that have left their most impressive mark on Transjordan are those of the Nabataeans and Romans. Petra and the temple of Khirbet Tannur (Fig. 15), excavated by the American School in Jerusalem, are outstanding examples of the Nabataean civilization. Philadelphia (now known as Amman and in ancient times as Rabbath-ammon) and Gerasa, two of the cities of the Decapolis in Transjordan, are outstanding examples of the civilization of the Roman period (Fig. 16 and 13). Desert areas dotted with prehistoric sites, and decorated with 8th century A. D. Umayyad hunting lodges; central highlands blessed with numerous springs and perennial streams, by which flourishing cities and villages existed in many ages (Fig. 17); steep slopes leading to wondrous depressions including

the blessed Jordan Valley (Fig. 18); the wastes of the Dead Sea being modernly made to yield its treasures of potassium salts and other valuable by-products; and the weird depths of the Wadi Arabah, whose copper and iron-mines once yielded great riches to King Solomon, and which are known today to contain oil — all these make up the physical complex of historical Transjordan.

At once closely related to Palestine, yet an entity separate and distinct in its own right, Transjordan today, as in the past, seems to be oriented more to the north and the south than to the west. And a new culture is developing there, steeped in the traditions of many previous civilizations.



Fig. 15. Ruins of a Nabataean temple at Khirbet Tannur. Outer east court, looking southeast. (Photo ASOR, Jerusalem)



ARCHAEOLOGICAL FACT AND FANCY

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A whole book could be written in support and amplification of H. G. May's fascinating article on "*Moses and the Sinai Inscriptions*" in your issue of December, 1945 (Vol. VIII. 4). There are so many similar cases of error and delusion in the popular presentation of archaeology.

Apart altogether from deliberate forgeries and deception of the



Fig. 16. The Roman theater of Amman, the modern capital of Transjordan and the ancient kingdom of Moab. When this theater was built, the city was known as Philadelphia. (Photo Government of Palestine, Dept. of Antiquities)

Shapira type a subtle temptation has always assailed the Biblical archaeologist: the temptation to special pleading on behalf, as he believes, of Divine revelation; to press the evidence unduly, in favor of what he calls "the truth of the Bible"; to embroider the less colourful discoveries so as to rouse popular interest; to overemphasize, when in doubt, that interpretation of the evidence which most suits his own pet theories; and to indulge in wishful thinking as to what the monuments, inscriptions, and unburied treasures of the Biblical past really do substantiate. Against such temptations both the reader and the writer should be warned, as Mr. May has warned them.

It is true that the writers of the nineteenth century, when archaeology was anything but an exact science, and the general public was interested in it less for its own sake than as a witness for the defence of religion, were infinitely more liable to this temptation than we are to-day. A piece of weather-worn timber found on Mount Ararat was a relic of the Ark; the discovery of salt in the coffin of Merenptah proved that he had indeed been drowned in the Red Sea; and so forth. Those were the days when newspapers sent out Special Correspondents to cover the

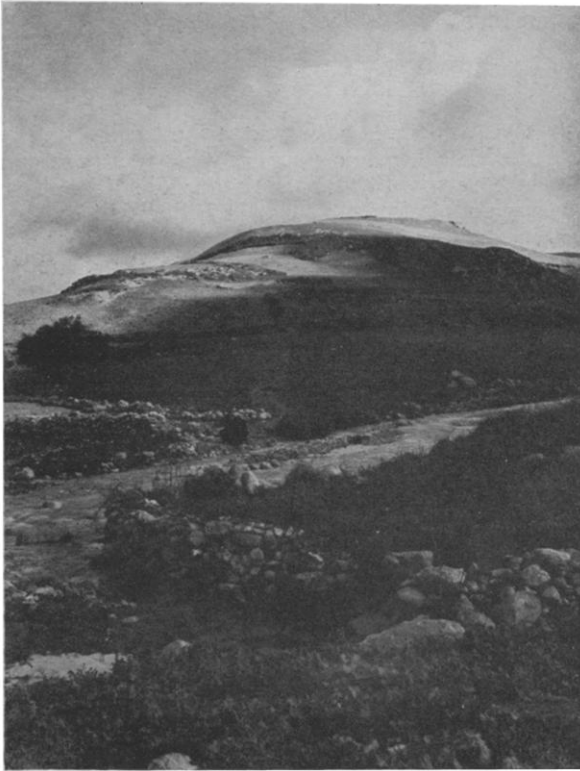


Fig. 17. Tell el-Maqlub, recently identified by Dr. Glueck as the site of Biblical Abel-meholal, the home of Elisha. In the foreground are the perennial waters of the Wadi Yabis, which flow down into the Jordan Valley. The eastern stretch of the Wadi Yabis is possibly to be identified with the Brook Cherith of I Kings 17:3-5. (Photo Nelson Glueck)

excavations in Bible Lands, when the publication of the Chaldean story of the Flood turned out to be a "best seller", and when privately financed societies sprang up in every cultured country of Christendom for the express purpose of digging up evidence on behalf of "Bible Truth." It was difficult for any archaeologist to deal dispassionately with his material without seeming to betray the very purpose of his existence — and the hopes of his backers.

But even in this twentieth century, Biblical archaeology has not been free from the temptation to special pleading and wishful thinking. Dr. Grimme's fanciful interpretation of the Sinaitic Inscriptions, "the product of a too-fertile imagination, and utter disregard of established philological principles", though published as late as 1923, was a lineal descendent of the earlier tradition, and is by no means an isolated example of it in the popularizations of the past forty years. It may be argued that a little exaggeration and over-colouring, if it succeeds in enticing the ordinary man to read his Bible, is more than justified. But it will not really do, in the long run. *Magna est veritas, et praevallet*; Truth will out, and it is Truth that matters most.

The discoveries of Biblical archaeology are interesting enough in themselves to need no adventitious adornment, and their relevance is far more richly appreciated if they are used, not to "confirm" this or that particular Bible statement, but to illuminate the background of the Scriptures as a whole. After all, it is a poor compliment to the sacred authors, that they should be required to show testimonials from heathen scribes and vainglorious tyrants before they can be believed! The Pharaohs could be terrible liars, nor is falsehood any more respectable because it happens to have been written thousands of years ago in the picturesque rune of hieroglyph or cuneiform. The vanities and prejudices of scholars, however learned and up-to-date, should have even shorter shrift. The public, in short, should be warned against tendencious popularizations of Biblical (or any other) archaeology. They should not be deluded into accepting conjectures, guesses, "probable reconstructions", and sensational theories, as though they were the assured results of archaeological research. It is true that, with the many gaps and uncertainties in the extant evidence, conjecture must find a place — it corresponds to the "working hypothesis" of the scientist; but the reader should always be frankly told which is fact and which is fancy.

That Professor May should have bluntly stated the plain facts about the Sinaitic Inscriptions can do nothing but good. This disappointment of some devout Bible readers, despoiled of Moses' autograph, will be more than counterbalanced by an increase of confidence in archaeology — and in *The Biblical Archaeologist*; and I for one hope that it will always be on the alert to prune excrescences on the tree of Truth.

An instructive example of this sort of thing was a curious misunderstanding that for long clung to the Philadelphia expedition's celebrated discovery of the Stele of Rameses II at Beth-shan shortly after the end of World War I — a misunderstanding all the more strange because those responsible for it were neither sensationmongers nor mere popularizers, but first-rate and conscientious scholars.

Let us start with the *unvarnished* truth about the inscription on this Stele. It merely stated that "the chieftains of the Rethenu (*Palestinians*) and of the Aamu and Shashu (*Asiatics*) were defeated by Rameses II (c. 1301-1234 B. C.) and made obeisance to him in his beautiful fortress of Raamses."

But when it came to publication, the temptation to enhance the importance of this find by stressing the reference to Raamses seems to have been irresistible. Was not Raamses one of the cities of Pharaoh

which the afflicted Israelites had been forced to build with “bricks without straw” in the famous story of Exodus? So when the Stele was reproduced for the first time (in the *Museum Journal*, 1923) the caption ran “A Stele of Rameses II which speaks of *the building* of Raamses in Egypt”. The ambiguity of our language here introduced a twist of its own. The word “building”, if intended as a noun, was correct: to interpret it as a verb was to put something into the inscription which was not there. But this is what happened. The caption continued, “on which building *Rameses used Semitic (i.e. Israelite) Labourers*”. This, intended doubtless as a mere gloss, was understood by the unwary as part of the translation of the hieroglyphic text, and before the printer’s ink was well dry the legend



Fig. 18. Tell el-Husn, the site of ancient Beth-shan, or Scythopolis as it was renamed in Roman times when it became the chief city of the Decapolis. It overlooks the Jordan and guards the east end of the east-west highway, with Megiddo being its western counterpart. (Photo S. J. Schweig)

had arisen that the Beth-shan excavations proved at long last the story of the affliction in Egypt, and definitely fixed the date of the Israelites’ building of the store-cities Pithom and Raamses!

Now any mention of the Date of the Exodus is to the Biblical archaeologists as a red rag to a bull. The feud between the Early-daters (hailing Amenhotep II [1447, though more recently 1436] as the Pharaoh of the Exodus) and the Late-daters (identifying him with Rameses II, or rather with his successor Merenptah [1235]), flared up at once, and the innocent little Stele became a *casus belli*, between the opposing sides.

The Late-daters were, of course, jubilant. So excited, indeed, that they had scarcely patience for the examination of the text itself, before rushing into the fray with their newly-discovered atomic bomb, which would surely demolish forever the flimsy tabernacles of the Early-daters. Dr. Fisher himself lent colour to this view, writing in that same issue of the *Museum Journal* that here, in this Stele of Rameses II, "we have found the long-sought confirmation of the Biblical record, that Israelites were used by Rameses II in the building of Pithom and Raamses, and the definite attestation that Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the Oppression."

Lest there should be any doubt about it, an article by Dr. Fisher's secretary, Mr. G. J. H. Ovenden, appeared in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* in 1923 stating that the Stele of Rameses II contains "a simple statement that Rameses II used Semites in the building of Raamses". By this time fact and fancy had become so inextricably mixed that even the scholars seem to have grown confused. In the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* of 1925 Dr. Hall, for example, refers to the Beth-shan Stele as "a very interesting statement that Rameses II used the tribe of the *Apriu* (i.e. Hebrews) to build his fortress of Raameses", and in his chapter in *The People and the Book* he mentions that "In the reign of Rameses II *Apriu* prisoners are actually spoken of as working at the building of Raamses", giving as his sole authority for this the original reference in the Philadelphia *Museum Journal* of 1923 which never mentions *Apriu* at all in connection with the Rameses Stele!

How the snowball had grown! An original statement that Rameses II received the homage of some defeated Palestinian chieftains at Raamses in the ninth year of his reign had become a proof that Hebrew prisoners were engaged by him in building the city, a confirmation of the Biblical record, and a key to the chronology of the Exodus!

Before Dr. Hall's work was actually published, however, he seems to have smelled a rat. What must have been his horror on verifying his reference, to find that the Stele said nothing of the sort! He was just in time to insert a *Corrigenda* slip in the book, withdrawing his original statement, before it was released for publication.

It was not until nearly ten years after the discovery of the Stele that the actual facts, as contrasted with the fancy, were published — in Dr. Alan Rowe's sumptuous volume *Beth-shan* (Philadelphia, University Press, 1930). Here at last we found a plain description of the Stele in question, with an exact translation of its inscription, so far as it could be deciphered. Dr. Rowe then remarks that "It has frequently been stated in the newspapers and elsewhere that this monument refers to the building of the city of Raamses of Exodus 1, 11, but this is not so. The text contains *no mention whatever* of any such building operations, nor of the Israelites, although it certainly does contain a reference to the famous Delta town of Raamses. The line in which this reference occurs merely states that the king 'causes the Aamu (Asiatics) to retreat, making to be at peace the fighting which had occurred among everyone. Those who desire, they come to him bowing down at his Castle of Life and Prosperity; Per-Ra-messumeri-Amen, Great-of-Victories.'"

So that was that! The *dementi* was complete and final. But it was too late to stop the ball rolling immediately. Already the mistaken impression

about the Stele had obtained wide currency, even in standard works like Oesterley and Robinson's *History of Israel* (1932) and Contenau's *Manuel d'archéologie*, whence it was copied by others. And its effect remained upon the Date-of-Exodus controversy, even after the cause had disappeared.

It all shows how careful one should be!

FIVE LECTURES ON THE RELIGION AND CULTURE OF ANCIENT EGYPT

The Committee on the History of Religions of the American Council of Learned Societies will sponsor a series of five illustrated lectures on The Religion and Culture of Ancient Egypt, by Professor Henri Frankfort, of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The lectures will be delivered during the period, October 1946—April 1947, and will be concerned with the following subjects: (1) The Egyptian Gods: a Problem of Polytheism; (2) The Egyptian State: an Element in the Created Order; (3) The Egyptian Way of Life: the Paradox of Pragmatism Preoccupied with Death; (4) The Egyptian Hope: Immortality through the Grave; (5) The Egyptian Testimony: Daring and Resignation in Literature and Art.

Inquires as to the availability of the lectures, in complete or partial series, may be addressed to any member of the Committee or to the Executive Offices of the Council. Members of the Committee are: Professor Herbert W. Schneider, Columbia University, Chairman; President Ernest Cadman Colwell, University of Chicago; Professor Arthur Jeffery, Columbia University; Professor Carl H. Kraeling, Yale University; and Professor Herbert May, Oberlin College.

The present Committee is the successor to the American Committee for Lectures on the History of Religions, organized in 1894 for the purpose of engaging distinguished scholars to lecture in colleges, universities, and seminaries. In most instances the lectures have found permanent form in publication. The volumes that have thus far appeared are:

T. W. Rhys-Davids, *Buddhism* (1894-95); Daniel G. Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples* (1896-97); T. K. Cheyne, *Jewish Religious Life after the Exile* (1897-98); Karl Budde, *Religion of Israel to the Exile* (1898-99); George Steindorff, *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians* (1904-05); George W. Knox, *The Development of Religion in Japan* (1905-06); Maurice Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda* (1906-07); A. V. Williams Jackson, *The Religion of Persia* (1907-08); Morris Jastrow, *Aspects of Religious Belief and Practice in Babylonia and Assyria* (1909-10); J. J. M. DeGroot, *The Development of Religion in China* (1910-11); Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (1911-12); C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism* (1914); J. S. Carpenter, *Phases of Early Christianity* (1916); Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Popular Religion* (1940).

INTRODUCTORY OFFER FOR STUDENTS

This fall we again offer *The Biblical Archaeologist* to students at the rate of 3 years for \$1.00. This offer is confined, however, to new subscribers, and does not include those who renew. Teachers are urged to call their students' attention to this bargain rate.

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REQUESTS FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBJECTS

Requests from colleges and universities are occasionally received by officers of the American Schools of Oriental Research for objects which might form the nucleus of a small museum and which could be used in teaching. It has been suggested that *The Biblical Archaeologist* act as a kind of clearing house for information on what is available and where. If there are persons and institutions which have surplus or duplicate material to illustrate the Bible, such as archaeological objects, models of such objects (including casts), Palestinian articles and installations, photos, wall maps, etc., let them communicate with the Editor. Send your names and addresses with brief descriptions of what you have. We shall be glad to print the first such notice of objects in any person's possession free of charge, though the description must be brief, simply characterizing the nature of what you have.

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NEW WALL MAPS

So many inquiries have been received as to what wall maps can be recommended and where they can be obtained, that it is a pleasure to announce the appearance of the *Westminster Wall Maps*, based upon the plates in the *Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible*, edited by Wright and Filson. Unfortunately, as would be expected, the prices of them are high, owing to the excessive costs at the present time. Information can be obtained from the Westminster Press, Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa.