

The Times of Abraham

DR. A.J.M. OSGOOD

INTRODUCTION

This article, “The times of Abraham”, attempts to show that the present accepted archaeological period placement of Abraham in the Palestinian Middle Bronze I period (MB I Albright nomenclature) has no basis in substance, and attempts to show that only the late Chalcolithic culture of Palestine satisfies the biblical criteria, so forcing a radical revision of the accepted chronology of the ancient world, in terms of biblical statements.

Many a reader of the Bible is impressed with the narrative of the life of Abraham as though it was written about a real person who lived in a real time and a real world. He has the strengths and the weaknesses of real men.

However, particularly since the documentary hypothesis (J.E.D.P. theory), the theological world has increasingly expressed doubts about the reality of the existence of a man called Abraham. The question has ebbed backwards and forwards. Increasingly however, archaeological finds confirm a correctness of the traditions associated with the Abrahamic story.

However, the documentary hypothesis has seriously impaired the willingness of many to see the Biblical narratives as straightforward stories based on historical reality. As John Bright puts it (after discussing the JEDP theory):

*“As for the patriarchal stories, though they were valued for the light they cast on the beliefs and practices of the respective periods in which the various documents were written, their worth as sources of information concerning Israel’s prehistory was regarded as minimal if not nil. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were commonly explained as eponymous ancestors of clans, or even as figures of myth, and their real existence was not infrequently denied. The patriarchal religion as depicted in Genesis was held to be a back-projection of later beliefs. In line with evolutionary theories abroad at the time, the actual religion of Israel’s nomadic ancestors was described as an animism or polydaemonism.”*¹

The problem concerning Abraham historically is compounded by the combined problems discussed in “The Times of the Judges — the Archaeology”, namely:

1. THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION,
2. THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS,
3. THE ACCEPTED YARDSTICK OF THE EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY OF MONETHO, and
4. ACCEPTANCE OF DATING METHODS BEING TRULY OBJECTIVE.

The resultant confusion leaves us today with a conviction that Abraham was an historical figure, yet with no really convincing time slot archaeologically in which to place him, which can bear up to solid scrutiny, and certainly no positive identification of events in Abraham’s life occurring at any particular time slot archaeologically.

PRESENT TIME PLACEMENT OF ABRAHAM

The accepted or evolutionary time scale for the Paleolithic to Iron Age sequence, when placed side by side with the known time relationships in the Scripture concerning Abraham, allows a placement of Abraham of somewhere around the Middle Bronze I period (abbreviated MB I), variously referred to as Early Bronze IV (EB IV) in Palestine, or Intermediate Early Bronze-Middle Bronze (see Figure 1). The placement originally of Abraham in this time slot can be largely traced to Nelson Glueck, with support from William Albright.

Nelson Glueck was one who asserted the correctness historically of Scripture, yet held an evolutionary chronology and so placed Abraham in Middle Bronze I.

*“If one believes, as we do, in the validity of the historical memories of the Bible, and if one accepts as real flesh and blood human beings the personages reflected in the portrayals of the Biblical Patriarchs, then the Age of Abraham must be assigned to the Middle Bronze I period. Ending in the nineteenth century B.C. ... The only archaeological framework in which the person and period of Abraham in the Negeb can be placed is Middle Bronze I.”*²

In that same discussion, Nelson Glueck insists that the destructions of MB I settlements corresponded to the biblical account of the destruction inflicted by Chedorlaomer and his confederates (Genesis 14). However, apart from the

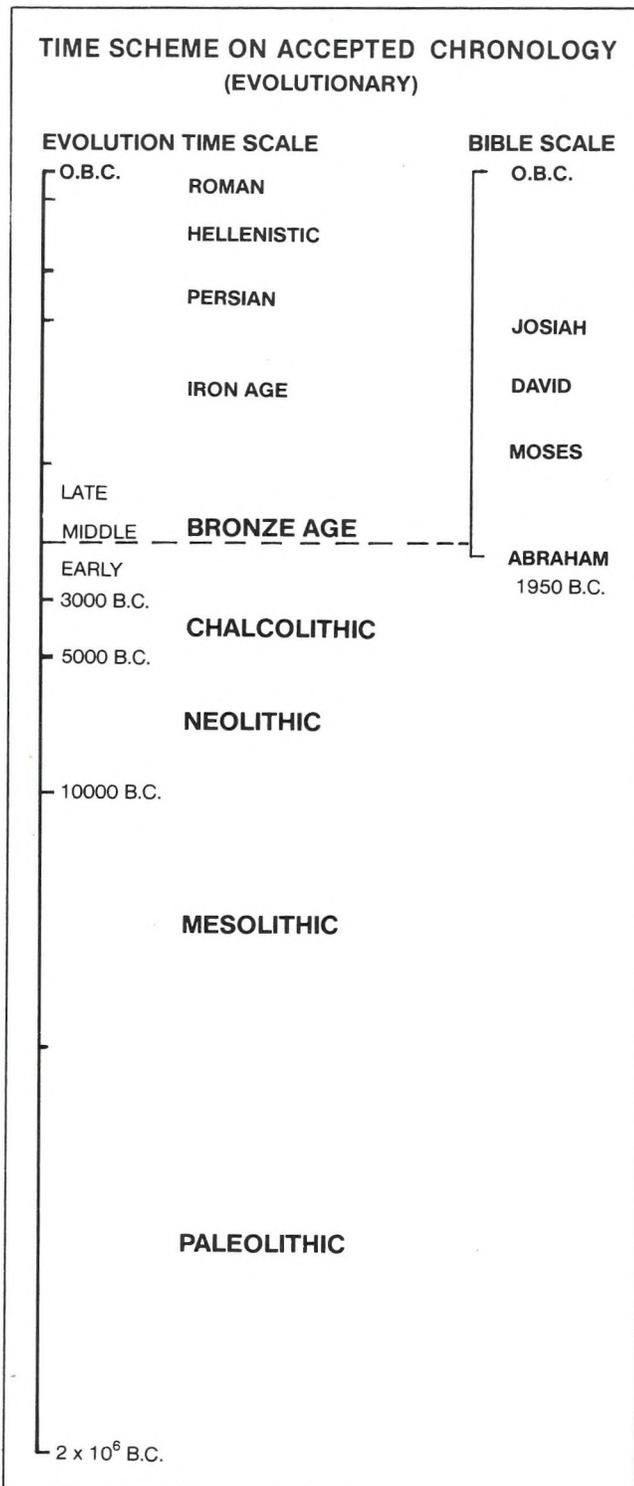


Figure 1. Time scheme of the accepted evolutionary chronology.

statement of such, he offered no positive evidence to confirm that such an historical link-up can be made more secure than the simple statement of belief.

William Albright was quick to ally himself with Nelson Glueck and established a belief that Abraham was one who plied a trade as a donkey caravaner

between Mesopotamia and Egypt. This is a belief that was Albright's, but certainly does not conform to the Scriptures, in the literal sense.

*"Nelson Glueck was prompt to associate the biblical traditions of Abraham with the MB I remains in the Negeb; he also recognised the fact that the settlements from this age were connected with old caravan routes."*³

So the MB I period of Palestine has since been indelibly associated with the time of Abraham in the minds of many. The characteristics of this age have been argued over time and time again, and they are still the subject of lively debate.

Essentially then, the time of Abraham has been fixed in MB I for the following reasons:

- (1) It fits the presently accepted chronology as far as **DATING** is concerned if one accepts the time relationships the Bible claims. (It is then keyed in on an evolutionary time scale.)
- (2) The MB I period does have characteristics that suggest a nomadic people, and as Abraham had certain nomadic characteristics, the belief is made to stick.

However, placement of Abraham in the Middle Bronze I Age has nothing more positive than that to offer. There are no positive identifying features that can make it certain that Abraham is to be placed in this age. It still remains a 'correct' fit as far as the accepted chronology is concerned and that is where the matter rests.

A NEED FOR A RE-EVALUATION

In no way can it be said that the times of Abraham have been established. Moreover, there is much about the presently accepted archaeological time slot which makes one feel quite uneasy. Abraham was the product of a generation that can be traced in the Bible ten generations from the Flood, the Bible narrative giving the impression that only about 430 years elapsed from the time of the world-wide catastrophic Flood until the times of Abraham in Canaan (see Figure 2). Yet on the accepted time scale we are to admit huge amounts of time for the development of civilizations prior to the times of Abraham.

This leaves us with three possible options:

1. To accept the present chronology and minimize the historicity of the biblical genealogies, a point that those who hold its message dear for faith find extremely difficult;
2. Disbelieve the historicity of Abraham altogether and claim that the biblical record is simply an

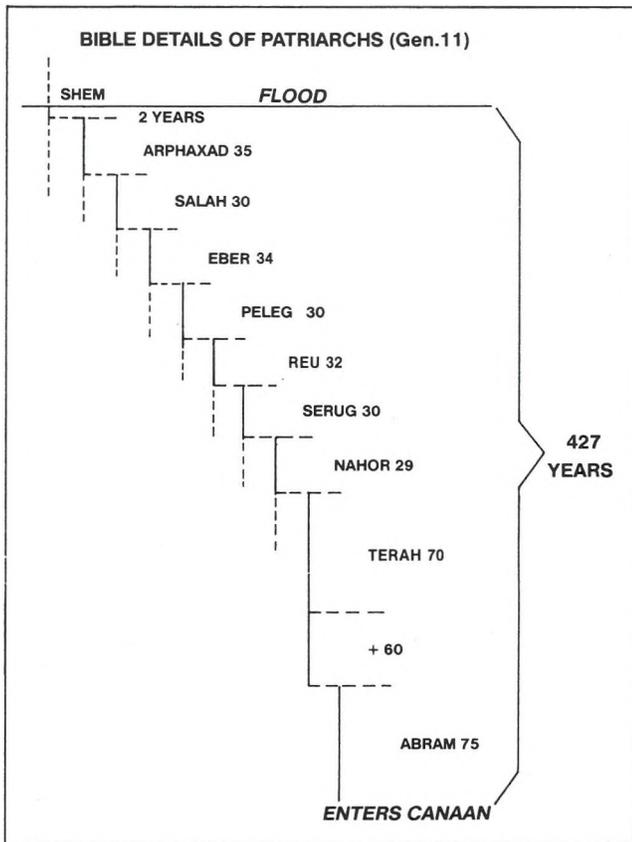


Figure 2. Biblical details of the patriarchs

allegory for some pious religious purpose. This is the position adopted by many documentary hypothesists; or

3. Re-evaluate the whole archaeological record in terms of the Bible’s time framework alone. This is the task of the present author.

There is much at stake in this discussion, for the whole historical validity of the Scriptural message of hope is at stake. The reality of the promises and covenants (legal agreements) of the spiritual message of hope rest on the historical validity of those promises and covenants. The world’s hope stands or falls on this issue. It cannot just be left to be dealt with in the cold halls of the intellectual who otherwise has no interest in the biblical message, for it is of dynamic concern to all people.

The genealogy of Genesis 11 has been put under the microscope by many, often without due regard to the Hebrew text. Some would claim that there are gaps in this genealogy. This of course would solve part of the problem, if such gaps exist. However, the formula of the genealogy leaves this impossible if one is to accept the Hebrew text as correct, for it has the following formula:

$$X \text{ at age } Z \text{ begat } Y$$

That is, a named person at a named age begat a named person. Such a formula absolutely resists the input of gaps, unlike the genealogy of Matthew’s gospel (Matthew 1), which allows a gap without denying the historical reality of missed generations in that genealogy.

Matthew’s formula of ‘A begat B’ allows gaps, Genesis does not. We must insist that if the Hebrew words mean anything they must be taken at face value and resist the insertion of gaps. The issue is one of correctness historically or otherwise of this whole record.

A NEW PLACEMENT OF ABRAHAM'S TIME AGAINST THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

In order to arrive at an approximate guide as to where we should look for the times of Abraham we start with the biblical dates from the Flood to Christ, as years B.C., and attempt to reinterpret all the archaeological data against that time scale. This has been done before in “The Times of the Judges — the Archaeology” (see Osgood, EN Tech. J., this volume). The resultant chronological table is reproduced here in Figure 3 with the area of Abraham pin-pointed.

It can be seen against this archaeological table that Abraham fits somewhere towards the end of the Neolithic of Jericho passing into the Chalcolithic of Jericho. It is around that approximate area we will now look in the archaeological record to see if we can make positive identification of the times of Abraham. The reader will no doubt appreciate the huge difference in time on the accepted scale between the Chalcolithic of Palestine and the MB I of Palestine. What I am insisting here is that the whole archaeological chronology must be re-evaluated against the biblical record. Let us begin that re-evaluation.

In order to make positive identification of the period of Abraham we will begin with a narrative in the life of Abraham as taken from Genesis 14.

Genesis 14 is a narrative which begins with a confederation of four Mesopotamian kings:—

- (1) Amraphel, king of Shinar
- (2) Arioch, king of Ellasar
- (3) Chedorlaomer, king of Elam
- (4) Tidal, king of Goiim (Genesis 14:1)

These extended their empire to include Palestine, or at least the Jordan valley, and in particular they brought under their suzerainty the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim and Bela — the five cities of the plain. For twelve years (verse 4) this

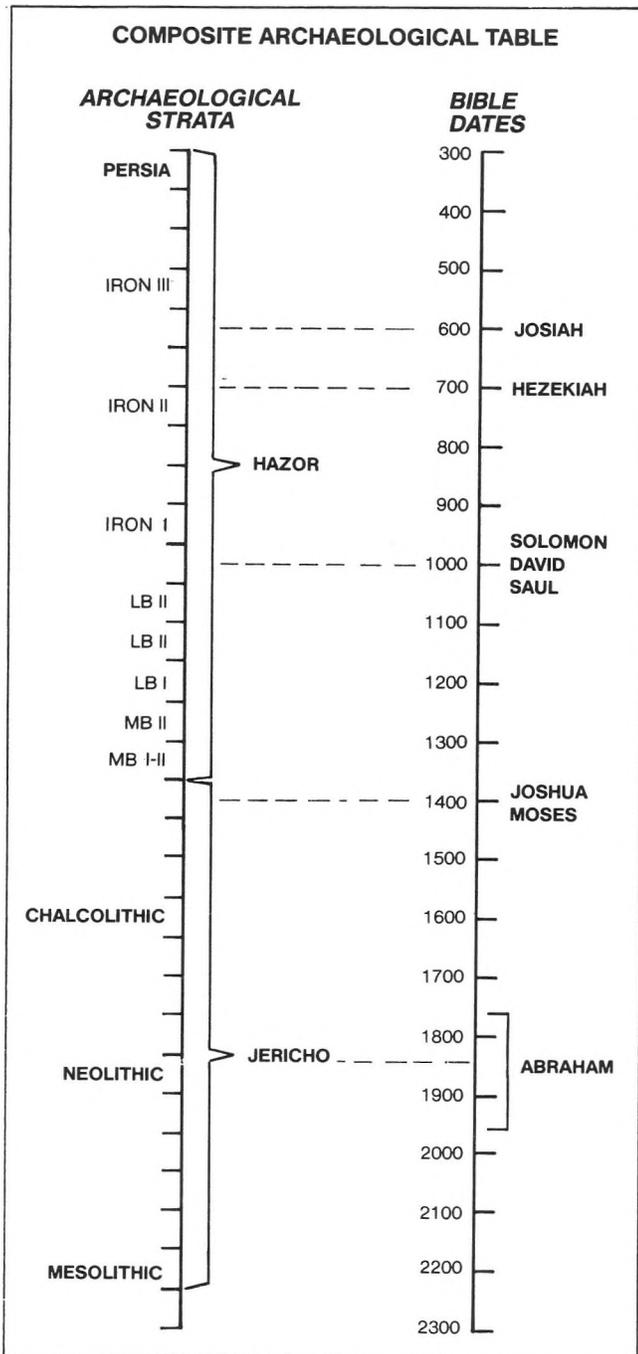


Figure 3. Composite archaeological table.

continued, but in the thirteenth year the kings of the plain rebelled, so in the fourteenth year the four kings of Mesopotamia, apparently with Chedorlaomer as chief, came and attacked the whole region.

Now many have been the attempts to identify these kings, for most have realised that if they can be identified in the archaeological record, then the times of Abraham can be found for certain. As R.K. Harrison has put it:

“The chronology of the patriarchal period would

be stabilized if a reliable identification of the four invading Mesopotamian kings could be made. This may emerge as the result of future excavations in the area, but in the meantime the chronology of the period under consideration must be placed between the twentieth and the late seventeenth centuries B.C.”⁴

The problem is not so much one of identification of the kings, for they are named in the narrative and their nations are given. Rather it is a problem of identifying the period from which these kings came in an archaeological context. So far this has defied success. However, it is my hope that the discussion here will lay to rest that search as we identify the only period when such a confederation could conceivably have existed.

In order to achieve this we will continue the narrative and the search for the details of this narrative in the life of Abraham.

When the four kings of Mesopotamia attacked, they followed a particular course which can be seen on the maps in Figures 4 and 5. They came down through Syria into the Bashan area where they attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim (Genesis 14:5). Then they proceeded southwards into Trans Jordan to the later Ammonite area and attacked the Zuzim in Ham. (These are later mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:20.) Moving further south into the region later identified as Moab, they attacked the Emim (Deuteronomy 2:10), and then on they went down into the region which later became Edom, where they attacked the Horites in Mt Seir (see Deuteronomy 2:22). Having completed their conquest of Trans Jordan, they crossed the Arabah into the Negev of later Israel and attacked both En Mishpat (Genesis 14:7) (most likely Kadesh Barnea), and the area later inhabited by the Amalekites which was westward of Kadesh Barnea. Having completed that,

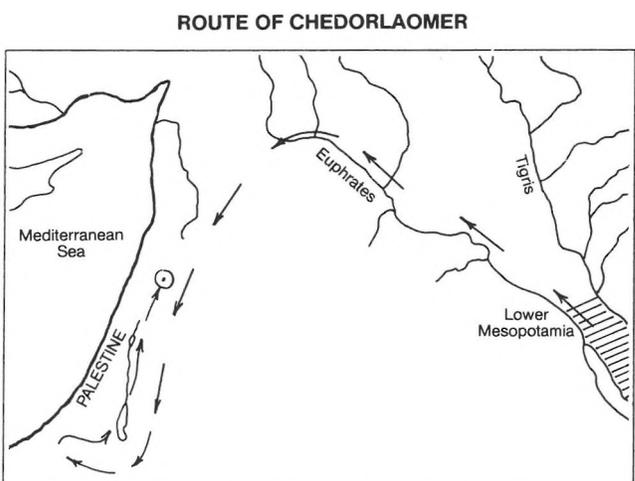


Figure 4. Route of Chedorlaomer

PROPOSED COURSE OF CHEDORLAOMER

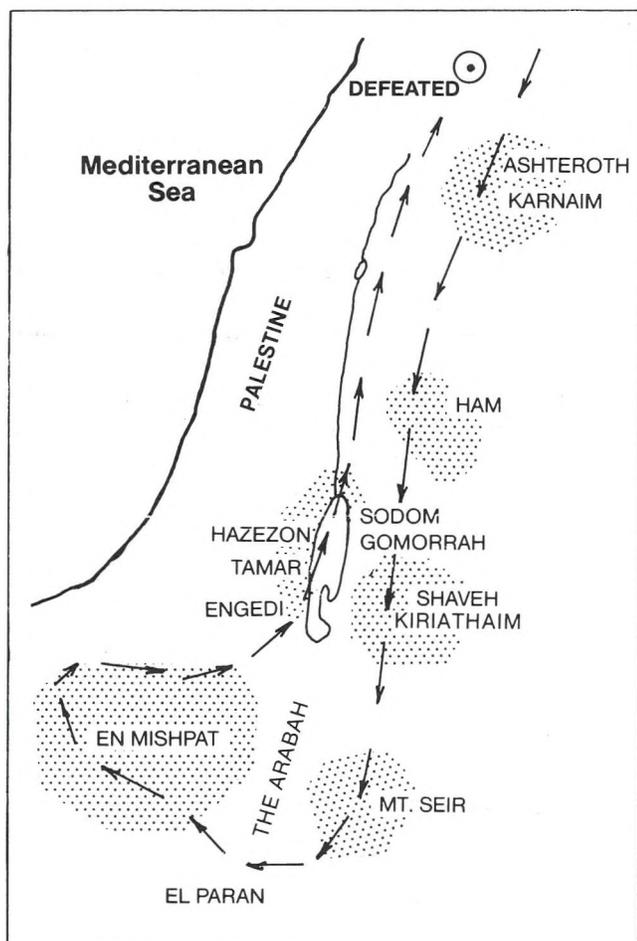


Figure 5. Course of Chedorlaomer (as proposed).

they then headed northwards again along the Jordan valley and attacked the Amorites in Hazezon-tamar. Continuing further north, they met in battle the kings of the five cities of the plain, defeated them, took captives and headed north. They were then pursued by Abram with his own private army allied with Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, the Amorite chieftains (Genesis 14:24). They overtook the Mesopotamian kings in Syria, defeated them, and returned with the spoils to Canaan.

As is often the case, the positive clue comes from the most insignificant portion of this passage. In Genesis 14:7 we are told that the kings of Mesopotamia attacked “the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon-tamar”. Now 2 Chronicles 20:2 tells us that Hazezon-tamar is En-gedi, the oasis mentioned in Scripture a number of times on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

The passage in Genesis chapter 14, therefore, allows us to conclude that in the days of Abraham there was a civilization in En-gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea, a civilization of Amorites, and

that these were defeated by Chedorlaomer in his passage northward.

FOCUS ON EN-GEDI

Happily for us, En-gedi has been excavated.^{5,6} The excavations found only three **major** periods of settlement at En-gedi:-

1. The Roman period — not relevant here
2. During the Kingdom of Israel — not relevant here
3. During the Chalcolithic of Palestine — the largest and most prolific settlement period.

In fact, a building complex was discovered situated on a hill terrace above the spring of En-gedi approximately 150 metres north. This appeared to be a sacred enclosure, similar to the Chalcolithic sanctuary discovered in Stratum XIX at Megiddo. Notably, the enclosure at En-gedi was not destroyed, but was abandoned with the people apparently taking their cult furniture with them.

I believe it is more than coincidental that corresponding to our new match on the archaeological table we find that there was in fact a civilization in En-gedi during this archaeological period. The picture becomes even more illuminated when we are led into the various caves around the En-gedi region, and particularly to one called the Cave of the Treasure.

In 1960 an expedition of urgency into the Judean desert was conducted by the Hebrew University, the Department of Antiquities, and the Israel Exploration Society with help from the armed forces of Israel. The precipitating motive was to rescue antiquities, such as finds like the Dead Sea Scrolls, from destruction, and to do a complete search of the caves of the Judean desert to look for antiquities for preservation (see Figure 6).

Many caves were found and finds were such that it was clear that the greatest time of occupation was the Chalcolithic period. Although the caves themselves were apparently occupied for only a brief period, they testified to prolific civilization and a significant population density in this area greater than for any later one. The conclusion can almost certainly be drawn that the sanctuary at En-gedi was the focal point for their worship.

One of the most remarkable caves was the cave of the treasure in Nahal Mishmar. Details have been fully published in ‘The Cave of the Treasure’ by Pessah Bar-Adon.⁷ A significant treasure of cult artifacts and weapons was found, testifying to a wealth of culture at this period.

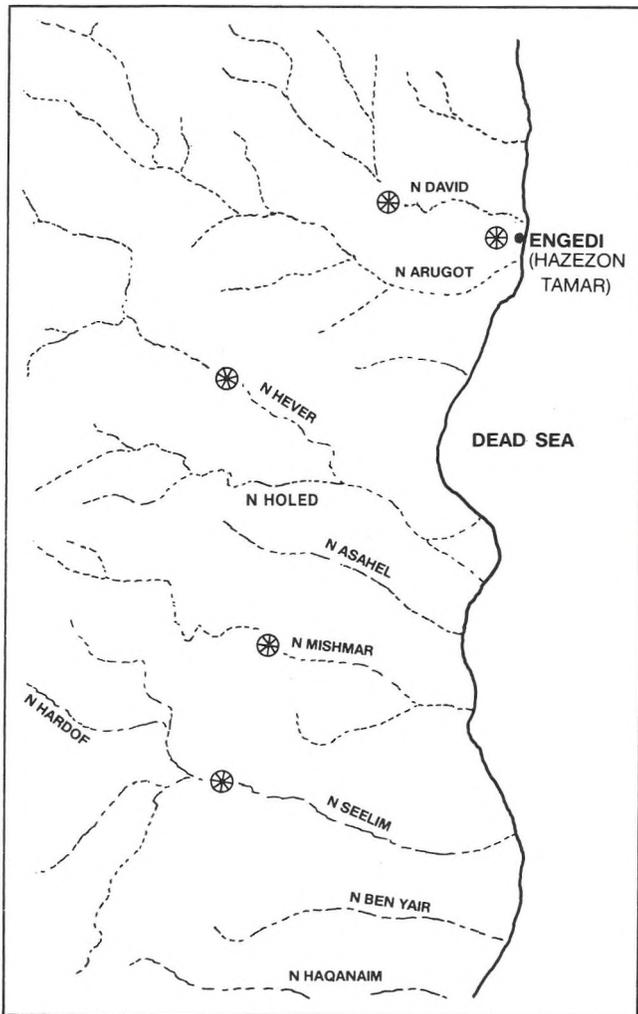


Figure 6. Significant Chalcolithic finds.

Bar-Adon comments:

*"It took us three hours to remove the articles, which were wrapped in a straw mat, from their hiding place — four hundred and twenty nine in all. Apart from six of haematite, six of ivory and one of stone, all the rest are of metal. They were all of a surprisingly high technical standard of workmanship."*⁸

And he goes on:—

*"The hoard comprised the following: axes and chisels; hammers; 'mace heads'; hollow stands decorated with knobs, branches, birds, and animals such as deer, ibex, buffalo, wild goats, and eagle; 'horns' [in one of which there was still a piece of thread running through the perforations at the edge]; smooth and elaborately ornamented 'crowns'; small baskets; a pot; a statuette with a human face; sceptres; flag poles; an ivory box; perforated utensils made — as subsequently determined by Prof. Haas — from hippopotamus tusks; and more."*⁸

They dated it to the Chalcolithic period.

Bar-Adon queried the reasons for the articles in this context as if somebody had left them there and intended to return but was not able to. He continues on:—

"What induced the owners of this treasure to hide it hurriedly away in the cave? And what was the event that prevented them from taking the treasure out of its concealment and restoring it to its proper place? And what caused the sudden destruction of the Chalcolithic settlements in the Judean Desert and in other regions of Palestine?"^{8:226}

The remarkable thing about this culture also was that it was very similar, if not the same culture, to that found at a place in the southern Jordan Valley called Taleilat Ghassul (which is the type site of this culture), and also resembles the culture of Beersheba. The culture can in fact be called 'Ghassul culture' and specifically Ghassul IV.

The Ghassul IV culture disappeared from Trans Jordan, Taleilat Ghassul and Beersheba and the rest of the Negev as well as from Hazezon-tamar or Engedi apparently at the same time. It is remarkable when looked at on the map that this disappearance of the Ghassul IV culture corresponds exactly to the areas which were attacked by the Mesopotamian confederate of kings. The fact that Engedi specifically terminates its culture at this point allows a very positive identification of this civilization, Ghassul IV, with the Amorites of Hazezon-tamar.

If that be the case, then we can answer Bar-Adon's question very positively. The reason the people did not return to get their goods was that they had been destroyed by the confederate kings of Mesopotamia, in approximately 1,870 B.C. in the days of Abraham.

Now as far as Palestine is concerned, in an isolated context, this may be possible to accept, but many might ask: What about the Mesopotamian kings themselves? Others may ask: What does this do to Egyptian chronology? And still further questions need to be asked concerning the origin of the Philistines in the days of Abraham, for the Philistines were closely in touch with Abraham during this same period (Genesis 20). So we must search for evidence of Philistine origins or habitation at approximately the end of the Chalcolithic (Ghassul IV) in Palestine. All these questions will be faced.

THE MESOPOTAMIAN COMPLEX OF CHEDORLAOMER

Ghassul IV corresponds in Mesopotamia to the period known as the Jemdat-Nasr/ Uruk period, otherwise called Protoliterate (because it was during this period that the archaeologists found the first evidence of early writing). Ghassul IV also

CORRELATION OF NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS

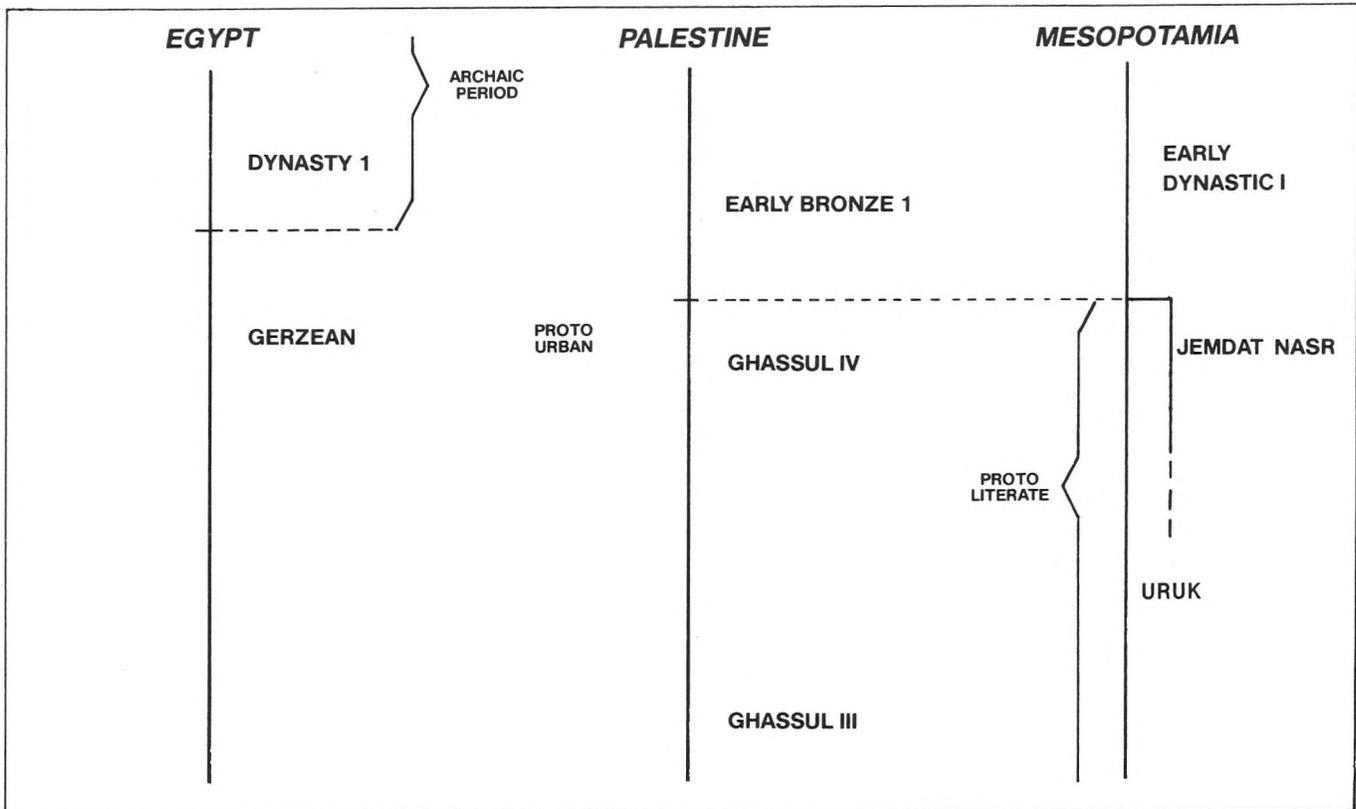


Figure 7. Correlation of national archaeological periods.

corresponds to the last Chalcolithic period of Egypt, the Gerzean or pre-Dynastic period (see Figure 7). Let us look, therefore, at both of these geographically and archaeologically, and see what we find.

Uruk is so called because it refers to a culture associated with the archaeological site called Warka (Uruk of Mesopotamian history or biblical Erech — Genesis 10:10) in the land of Sumer or biblical Shinar (see Figure 8), and we note that one of the kings of the Mesopotamian confederacy came from Shinar, namely Amraphel.

Jemdat Nasr is a site in northern Sumer, northeast of Babylon (see Figure 8). It is a site that was found to have a pottery with similarities to the culture of Elam and corresponding in time to the later phases of the Uruk culture.

We have in Mesopotamia, therefore, archaeological evidence that there was a period in which the Uruk culture, and an Elamite culture typified by Jemdat Nasr, were in some sort of combination, and this corresponds to the period in Palestine when the Ghassul culture disappeared. The writing of this period does not allow us to recognise at this point any particular kings from contemporary records for it is undeciphered, but all that is known archaeologically is in agreement with the possibility of a combine of nations of the

description of Genesis 14 existing. Considering the war-like attitudes of Sumer and Elam in later years this is all the more remarkable, for no other period of Sumer/Elamite relationship accepts the possibility of such a semi-benevolent relationship.

Archaeology in Iran, in the plain of Susiana, has demonstrated a resurgent Elamite culture contemporary with Jemdat Nasr in Mesopotamia,⁹ and this fits the biblical suggestion of a dominant Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14).

Considering the fact that the Bible allows the interpretation of Chedorlaomer being the chief of the combine of kings, one could even theorise that Jemdat Nasr may have been a site deliberately built by the Elamite king to assist control of the region of Sumer, but that remains highly speculative.

We have then so far, in summary, the following evidence as a witness that the end of the Chalcolithic in Palestine was during the days of Abraham:—

1. A fit on the archaeological table previously presented that corresponds.
2. Positive identification of a culture, corresponding exactly geographically to the biblical story, which disappeared from the scene at that period of time in Palestine and Trans Jordan.

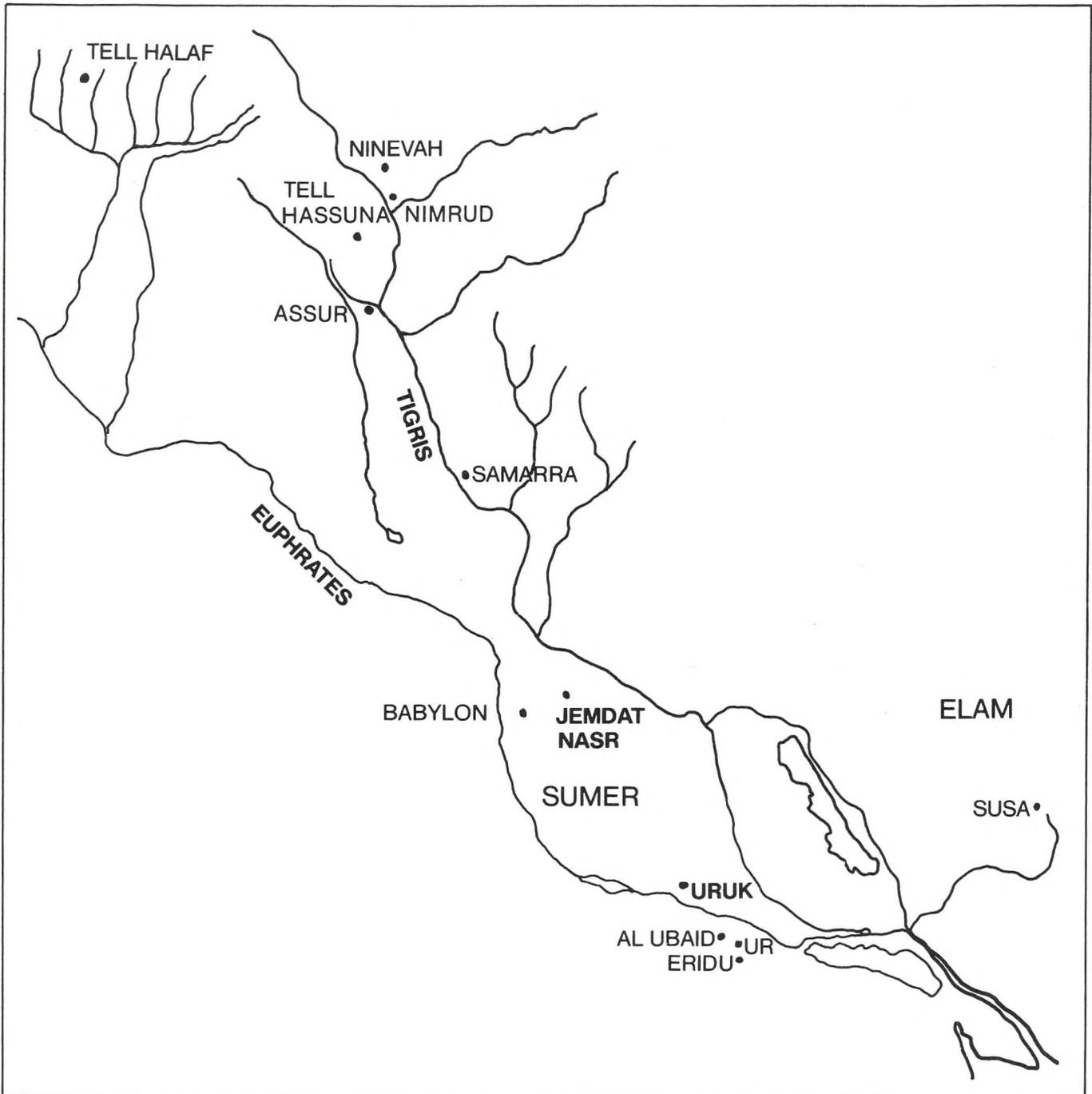


Figure 8. Location of Uruk, Jemdat Nasr and other important cities in Mesopotamian history.

3. Archaeological evidence in Mesopotamia which is consistent with a combination of Sumerian and Elamite kings, and which definitely allows the possibility of other confederates.

BUT EGYPT!

At this stage there will be many objections to the hypothesis here presented, for it is totally contradictory to the presently held Egyptian

chronology of the ancient world. However, I would remind my reader that the Egyptian chronology is not established, despite claims to the contrary. It has many speculative points within it. Let us continue to see if there is any correspondence, for if Abraham was alive in the days of the Ghassul IV culture, then he was alive in the days of the Gerzean culture of pre-Dynastic Egypt, possibly living into the days of the first Dynasty of Egypt.

The correspondence between this period in

Palestine and in Egypt is very clear, and has been solidly established, particularly by the excavations at Arad by Ruth Amiram¹⁰ and at Tel Areini by S. Yeivin.¹¹

Such a revised chronology as here presented would allow Abraham to be in contact with the earliest kings of Dynasty I and the late pre-Dynastic kings, and this would slice a thousand years off the presently held chronology of Egypt. To many the thought would be too radical to contemplate. The author here insists that it must be contemplated. Only so will the chronology of the ancient world be put into proper perspective. Long as the task may take, and however difficult the road may be, it must be undertaken.

In order to support the present revised chronology here held, the author sites another correspondence archaeologically, and this concerns both the Philistines and Egypt.

THE PHILISTINE QUESTION

Genesis 20 makes it clear that Abraham was in contact with the Philistines, yet the accepted chronological record presently held does not recognise Philistines being in the land of Philistia at any time corresponding with the days of Abraham. Yet the Bible is adamant.

The Scripture is clear that the Philistines were in Canaan by the time of Abraham, approximately 1850 B.C., or at least around the area of Gerar between Kadesh and Shur (Genesis 20:1), and Beersheba (Genesis 21:32) (see Figure 9). A king called Abimelech was present, and his military chief was Phicol (Genesis 21:22).

The land was called the Land of the Philistines (Genesis 21:32). According to Genesis 10:14, the Philistines were descendants of one Egyptian ancestor, Casluhim, but apparently they dwelt in the region occupied by Caphtor which was apparently the coastlands around the delta region. Now many attempts have been made to associate Caphtor with Crete, but the attempt is strained and unsubstantiated.

The Philistines migrated out of Caphtor northeast to Canaan (Deuteronomy 2:23, Jeremiah 47:4, Amos 9:7) (see Figure 9), dispossessing the ancient Canaanites, locally called the Avims (Deuteronomy 2:23), some of whom were still in existence in the days of Joshua (Joshua 13:3). This migration was Egyptian, but in fact the stock were the later Philistines. It may have included more than just the Philistines, but the Philistines apparently superseded the others. They are called the “remnant of the country of Caphtor” (Jeremiah 47:4).

We have placed the end of the Chalcolithic of the

Negev, En-ge-di, Trans Jordan and Taleilat Ghassul at approximately 1870 B.C., being approximately at Abraham’s 80th year. Early Bronze I Palestine (EB I) would follow this, significantly for our discussions. Stratum V therefore at early Arad (Chalcolithic) ends at 1870 B.C., and the next stratum, Stratum IV (EB I), would begin after this.

Stratum IV begins therefore some time after 1870 B.C.. This is a new culture significantly different from Stratum V.¹²

Belonging to Stratum IV, Amiram found a sherd with the name of Narmer (First Dynasty of Egypt),^{10,13} and she dates Stratum IV to the early part of the Egyptian Dynasty I and the later part of Canaan EB I. Amiram feels forced to conclude a chronological gap between Stratum V (Chalcolithic) at Arad and Stratum IV EB I at Arad.^{12,116} However, this is based on the assumption of time periods on the accepted scale of Canaan’s history, long time periods which are here rejected.

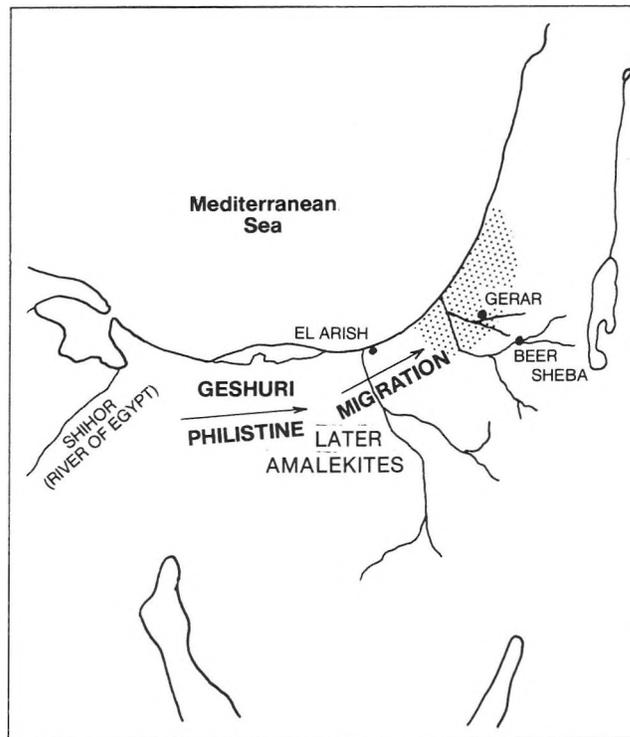


Figure 9. Proposed route of migration of the Philistines from Egypt to Palestine.

The chronological conclusion is strong that Abraham’s life-time corresponds to the Chalcolithic in Egypt, through at least a portion of Dynasty I of Egypt, which equals Ghassul IV through to EB I in Palestine. The possibilities for the Egyptian king of the Abrahamic narrative are therefore:-

1. A late northern Chalcolithic king of Egypt, or
2. Menes or Narmer, be they separate or the same king (Genesis 12:10-20).

Of these, the chronological scheme would favour a late Chalcolithic (Gerzean) king of northern Egypt, just before the unification under Menes.

Thus the Egyptian Dynastic period would start **approximately 1860 B.C.** Clearly, if this were the case, by this scheme the Philistines were in Canaan already, and must therefore **have at least begun their migration in the late Chalcolithic of Egypt and Palestine.**

Therefore, we need to look in southwest Canaan for evidence of Egyptian (cum Philistine) migration, beginning in the late Chalcolithic and possibly reaching into EB I (depending on the cause and rapidity of migration), in order to define the earliest Philistine settlement of Canaan from Egyptian stock. Is there such evidence? The answer is a clear and categorical YES.

Amiram, Beit-Ariah and Glass¹⁴ discussed the same period in relationship between Canaan and Egypt. So did Oren.¹⁵

Of the period Oren says:

“Canaanite Early Bronze I-II and Egyptian late pre-Dynastic and early Dynastic periods”.^{15:200}

He says of the findings in Canaan:

“The majority of Egyptian vessels belong to the First Dynasty repertoire while a few sherds can be assigned with certainty to the late pre-Dynastic period.” (emphasis mine)^{15:203} He continues:

“The occurrence of Egyptian material which is not later than the First Dynasty alongside EB A I-II pottery types has been noted in surface collections and especially in controlled excavations in southern Canaan. This indicates that the appearance and distinction of the material of First Dynasty in northern Sinai and southern Canaan should be viewed as one related historical phenomenon.” (emphasis mine)^{15:203}

The area surveyed was between Suez and Wadi El-Arish. EB I-II had intensive settlement in this area.

He continues further:

“Furthermore, the wide distribution of Egyptian material and the somewhat permanent nature of the sites in Sinai and southern Canaan can no longer be viewed as the results of trade relations only. In all likelihood Egypt used northern Sinai as a springboard for forcing her way into Canaan with the result that all of southern Canaan became an Egyptian domain and its resources were exploited on a large scale.” (emphasis mine)^{15:204}

And again:

“The contacts which began in pre-Dynastic times, were most intensive during the First Dynasty period”.^{15:204}

Ram Gopha¹⁶ is bolder about this event or phenomenon, insisting on it being a migration:

“Today we seem to be justified in assuming some kind of immigration of people from Egypt to southern Canaan. . .”^{16:31}

Further:

“... the Egyptian migration during the First Dynasty period may be seen as an intensification of previously existing relationships between the two countries. These relations had already begun in the Ghassulian Chalcolithic period but reached sizable proportions only in the Late Pre-Dynastic period” (first phases of Palestinian EB I). (emphasis mine)^{16:35}

The testimony is clear. Excavation at Tel Areini identifies such an Egyptian migration and settlement starting in the Chalcolithic period.¹⁷ There was definitely a migration of Egyptian people of some sort from northern Egypt into southern Palestine, and particularly the region that was later known as Philistia.^{16:32}

The testimony of Scripture is clear that there were Philistines who came from Egypt into Palestine in the days of Abraham. This revised chronology identifies such a migration in the days of the Ghassulians, who I insist, perished during the early days of Abraham’s sojourn in Canaan. This period must then be grossly redated in accordance with biblical expectations, instead of evolutionary assumptions.

FURTHER DETAILS OF THE PHILISTINES

Although in this discussion we are concerning ourselves with the days of Abraham, it is pertinent that we also elaborate on the question of the Philistines at a later period, in order that the overall perspective of these people be understood. Modern archaeological interpretation first allows the Philistines in the days of Ramesses III of the 20th Dynasty, dated 1182 to 1151 B.C.¹⁸

An inscription of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu reports an attack made by the peoples of the sea, among whom are a group called the **Peleset**. Ramesses claims to have defeated these in a sea battle. The Peleset are said to have settled in the area of the Philistines at approximately this time, and naturally it is assumed that the Philistines therefore first settled in Palestine at this period, and that they originated from the Aegean area as the peoples of the sea.

The Scripture, however, gives no credibility to such an interpretation. Thus, there is a conflict?

It is clear, from what has been said before of the narratives of Abraham and Isaac, that the Philistines were already in Palestine at approximately 1850 B.C., some 700 years before present archaeological interpretation accepts them as there. The Scripture also seems to indicate that they originated from

Egypt, and not from the Aegean area. Is there any way to satisfy both the biblical claims, and the artifactual archaeological evidence? I believe there is. But first we must accept the biblical statements at face value and scan the Scriptures for anything that might fit at approximately 1100 to 1000 B.C., and for a people who could in fact be identified with the Peleset “of the relief of Ramesses III”. Indeed, we do meet a people, first in 2 Samuel 8:18, and then subsequently in 2 Samuel 15:18 and 27:23, 1 Kings 1:38 and 44, 1 Chronicles 18:17, Ezekiel 25:16, and Zephaniah 2:5. They are called the **Pelethites**, and they are associated with the **Cherethites** and also, in at least one passage, the **Gittites** who were indeed a group of Philistines from the city of Gath.

Now it does not take much to realise that the word “Pelethite” is an even better match with the word “Peleset” in the Egyptian reliefs than is the word “Philistine”. So if the Bible allows a group of people by the name of Pelethites who clearly were associated in some way with the Philistine region, and who also were associated with the Cherethites (whom many believe to be the Cretians, who in one text, namely Ezekiel 25:16, are called the remnant of the sea coast), then we have all the conditions necessary to solve an apparent conflict. We have no need to reject the Philistines of Egyptian descent in Palestine at 1850 B.C., and we can accept a second wave of people known as the Pelethites and Cherethites, who settled on the sea coast before the days of Saul and David, who are evidenced by the archaeological record, and who apparently had an Aegean origin. There would still be some difficulty in this revised chronology in associating the initial settlement of the Pelethites and the Cherethites with the same event as recorded by Ramesses III. Rather, they would need to be seen as allies to the other peoples of the sea when they themselves were already settled in a land base in Philistia prior to the days of Ramesses III, but I will leave this to be detailed at another time. Sufficient to conclude here that the Pelethites and Cherethites of Scripture were first able to be identified at approximately 1012 B.C. in the later years of Saul, king of Israel. Contingents from these groups formed part of the guard of David, yet the true Philistines were of Egyptian descent and were already in the land of Palestine by 1850 B.C. in the days of Abraham. This narrative we should be able to accept literally as a direct statement of history, and to see it as most likely being the written correlation of the late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze I settlement of Egyptian stock in southern Palestine, as the archaeological record testifies.

SUMMARY

In summary, Abraham entered the land of

Canaan at approximately 1875 B.C.. In his days there was a settlement of Amorites in En-gedi, identified here with the Ghassul IV people. This civilization was ended by the attack of four Mesopotamian monarchs in a combined confederation of nations, here placed in the Uruk-Jemdat Nasr period in Mesopotamia. They were a significant force in ending the Chalcolithic of Palestine as we understand it archaeologically, and Abraham and his army were a significant force in ending the Jemdat Nasr domination of Mesopotamia, and thus the Chalcolithic of Mesopotamia, by their attack on these four Mesopotamian monarchs as they were returning home. Egypt was just about to enter its great dynastic period, and was beginning to consolidate into a united kingdom, when from northern Egypt a surge of Egyptian stock, including the Philistines, moved north into southern Palestine to settle, as well as to trade, identified in a number of sites in that region (most notably in the strata of Tel Areini, Level VI then V) as the Philistines with whom Abraham was able to talk face to face. The biblical narrative demands a redating of the whole of ancient history, as currently recognised, by something like a one thousand year shortening — a formidable claim and a formidable investigation, but one that must be undertaken.

REFERENCES

1. Bright, J., 1972. *A History of Israel*, The Westminster Press and SCM Press Ltd., p. 68.
2. Glueck, N., 1958. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, **152**: 20.
3. Albright, W.F., 1961. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, **163**: 44.
4. Harrison, R.K., 1970. *Old Testament Times*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 86.
5. Maser *et al.*, 1966. *En-gedi Excavations*, Jerusalem.
6. Avi-Yonah, M., 1976. *Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, VII*, Jerusalem and London, pp. 370–380.
7. Bar-Adon, P., 1980. *The Cave of the Treasure*, Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem.
8. Bar-Adon, P., 1962. *Israel Exploration Journal*, **12**: 218–226.
9. Ghirshman, R., 1954. *Iran*, Middlesex, England, p. 45.
10. Amiram, R., 1974. *Israel Exploration Journal*, **24**: 4–12.
11. Yeivin, S., 1960. *Israel Exploration Journal* **10**: 193–203.
12. Amiram, R., 1978. *Early Arad I*, Jerusalem.
13. Amiram, R., 1976. *Israel Exploration Journal*, **26**: 45.
14. Amiram, Beit Arieih, and Glass, 1973. *Israel Exploration Journal*, **23**: 193.
15. Oren, E.D., 1973. *Israel Exploration Journal*, **23**: 198–205.
16. Gophna, Ram, 1976. *Tel Aviv*, **3**(1): 31–37.
17. Weinstein, J., 1984. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, **256**: 61–69.
18. Gardiner, A., 1961. *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, Oxford.