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Sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God.”

—Christ's Object Lessons, page 360
Third Season of Heshbon

By SIEGFRIED H. HORN

READERS of the Review have been kept informed of the two previous archeological expeditions of Andrews University to Tell Hesban in Jordan, the site of the Biblical Heshbon, conducted in the summers of 1968 and 1971 (see Review, Jan. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1969, and Dec. 30, 1971, Jan. 6, 13, 20, 27, 1972). Thus it will not be necessary to repeat the history of this ancient city from Biblical and other sources, nor relate the methods employed in excavating its ruins.

From the inception of planning the excavations of this Biblical city it was the aim of the expedition to carry out a minimum of three seasons, since it is impossible to gain a reasonably clear picture of the history of a Palestinian site by merely conducting one or two seasons of excavations. In one season, which usually lasts from seven to eight weeks, one cannot penetrate into the debris of the tell (mound) deeper than about three meters (about 9 or 10 feet), while the accumulated debris on many ancient sites reaches depths of from 20 to 100 feet. The situation at Heshbon is not different. Here we also found thick layers of debris, covering the earliest historical remains, in some parts of the mound reaching to a depth of 30 feet.

The Results of the First Two Seasons. During the first two seasons our efforts were concentrated on the acropolis, the highest part of the mound, because experience has taught archeologists that the most important structures were usually located on or near the summit of an ancient city mound. In this respect our expectations were met, for we found the remains of an early Christian church, destroyed in the seventh century A.D., on top of the mound, and underneath it the foundations of an earlier structure of Roman times, possibly of a pagan temple.

The excavations of the first two seasons furthermore uncovered the remains of several other buildings, especially of the Byzantine and Islamic periods, when Heshbon was the capital of the Belqa district. But not much was found of earlier periods, especially of the city of Old Testament times, except that several thick layers of fill contained masses of pottery from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.

This was the situation that obtained at the end of the second season of excavations in 1971. Since we had failed to find remains of the earlier Heshbon, especially of the time of the Amorite King Sihon, whom Moses had defeated, we concluded that in the seventh century B.C. the city had probably been moved from its original site to the one we were excavating, taking its ancient name along.

We thought that during the third season we would obtain confirmation of the conclusions reached in previous years, and that, unless new evidence was unearthed, no further work would be required on the mound after the completion of the third season. However, we planned to look for a possible earlier site of Heshbon in the vicinity of Tell Hesban, hoping to switch future archeological operations to a site that held more promise of being the earlier Heshbon. Therefore we made plans to put a team in the field that would make a careful and thorough topographical and archeological surface survey of the Hesban area in a radius of about eight miles from the tell.

The 1973 Season. The third excavation lasted from June 20 to August 14, 1973. It was again sponsored by Andrews University, but was also supported by the American Center for Oriental Research in Amman, which in addition to a subsidy, provided the cook and most of the expedition's camp and dig equipment. Other supporters were Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and several private donors. As in previous seasons, I served as director, and Roger S. Boraas, of Uppsala College, East Orange, New Jersey, was chief archeologist.

The staff of archeologists, architects, photographers, registrars of pottery and objects, and other auxiliary services consisted of 57 members, of whom 48 were foreigners and nine Jordanians. About 20 staff members were graduate students. Half of the foreign staff had served at Hesban before, either in one or both seasons, and their experience was a contributing factor.

Squares B.2 and B.4 were excavated at Heshbon in 1973. A meter stick rests on the balk. Running in a diagonal direction in the foreground is an Iron II Age wall built on bedrock and probably part of a reservoir.

Roman and Byzantine glass vessels, in well-preserved condition, were found in tombs.
Excavations Part I

to the extraordinary success of the third season's dig. About 150 Jordanians were employed for field labor on the mound and for other duties connected with the expedition.

Bedrock in Most Areas Expected

As already stated, the 1973 campaign was planned to be the last of three projected seasons of excavations at Tell Hesban. It had been expected that during this season the excavations several new and completely unexpected features were discovered. To these features belong the remains of the twelfth- and eleventh-century B.C. occupation of the site, namely the period of the Hebrew judges. These remains consisted of architectural features and pottery-containing strata. Also architectural remains of the periods of the Israelite kings and of the Persian domination were found, as well as remains of the Hellenistic period when the Maccabees were in control of Hesban. All these remains had eluded us in the previous excavations.

The survey team was able to trace the course of the Roman road from Esbus, the name of Heshbon in Greek Roman times, to Livias, from where the road continued to Jericho and Jerusalem, and thoroughly explore the Wadi Heshban, the valley of Heshbon.

We were unable to carry out all our plans. For example, we were unable to complete our work at the church. The unexpected discovery and consequent excavation of a well-preserved Islamic bath installation situated on top of the remains of the western end of the church cost us much time and effort that at least another full season will be needed to complete the excavation of the western parts of the church.

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Furthermore, during the 1973 excavation of the remains of the Byzantine church on the summit of the tell could be completed, and that bedrock in most of the areas previously dug would be reached. It was also planned to make soundings at various sites in the lower parts of the tell. The survey team was given the task of tracing the Roman road from Esbus, the name of Heshbon in Greek Roman times, to Livias, from where the road continued to Jericho and Jerusalem, and thoroughly explore the Wadi Heshban, the valley of Heshbon.

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sons of excavations some sherds of the Iron I Age had been discovered, but never in stratigraphical context.

This situation was changed during the 1973 season. In two areas pure Iron I Age layers were found, and in one of them this material was connected with a heap of stones and the remains of a possible well. However, the excavated sector was too small to obtain definite architectural data with regard to the occupation of Heshbon during the judges period. It is hoped that future seasons of excavations will shed more light on this period in Heshbon.

Remains of the Late Hebrew Period. The period of the late Hebrew kings (Iron II Age) and of the Persian domination of Heshbon is now well represented by structural remains and pottery. Previously we had found only pottery from this period, but now we have several important architectural features, though at this stage of excavations our conclusions are still tentative. They will receive confirmation or revision in future seasons of work.

In the first place I must mention a wall of that time discovered (in Area C) on the western slope of the mound. We had cut a trench consisting of several squares into that slope in 1968 and continued this work in 1971 and 1973 in the hope of intercepting the city wall. The Bible mentions the “gate of Beth-rabbim” of Heshbon (Song of Solomon 7:4). On the basis of this text we reasoned that if a city had a gate it must have had a defensive wall, and we wanted to find it. Our patience during the first two seasons was put to a severe test, because nothing but deep layers of fill, containing material of later periods, was found, which covered all early architectural remains.

During the third season, however, a wall of the Iron II Age was found resting on a ledge of the original bedrock against a higher shelf of the rock, thus making undermining by enemy sappers difficult if not impossible. Against this wall a buttress was placed at a right angle, also resting on bedrock, down the slope of the mound.

Not enough has been uncovered in the excavated space to be certain of its function, but I consider it likely that these wall fragments are part of the city wall and of an adjoining tower of the time of Isaiah or Jeremiah, two prophets who mention Heshbon in their oracles (Isa. 15:4; 16:8, 9; Jer. 48:2-45; 49:3).

THE PRESENCE of God is uncomfortable to the person bent on sinning. He likes to get away, somewhere and someplace where he can entertain thoughts and deeds that God does not approve.

But where can he go? Going to another city is futile, for God is there too—seeing, hearing, and observing everything. Being who He is, God does not ignore, nor is He inattentive to, either sinner or saint. At all times and in all places, the person’s conscience is a witness to the ever-present, all-knowing Deity.

Commenting on the omnipresence of God, Ellen G. White writes, “We are never alone. Whether we choose Him or not, we have a companion. Remember that wherever you are, whatever you do, God is there. Nothing that is said or done or thought can escape His attention. To your every word or deed you have a witness—the holy, sin-hating God. Before you speak or act, always think of this.”—The Ministry of Healing, p. 490.

Theodore Carkich is a general vice-president of the General Conference.