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Archeological News

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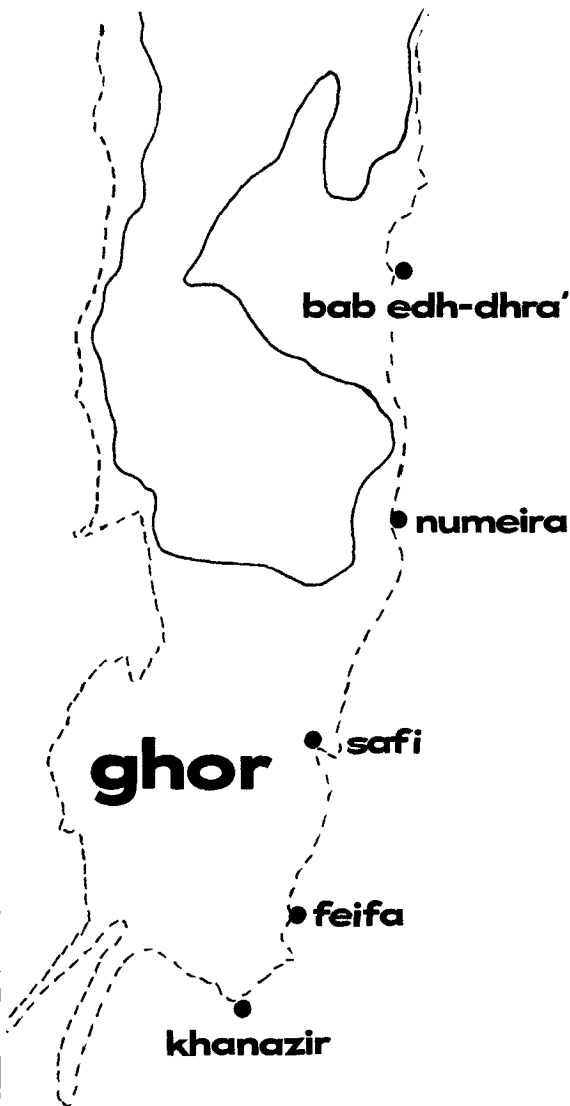
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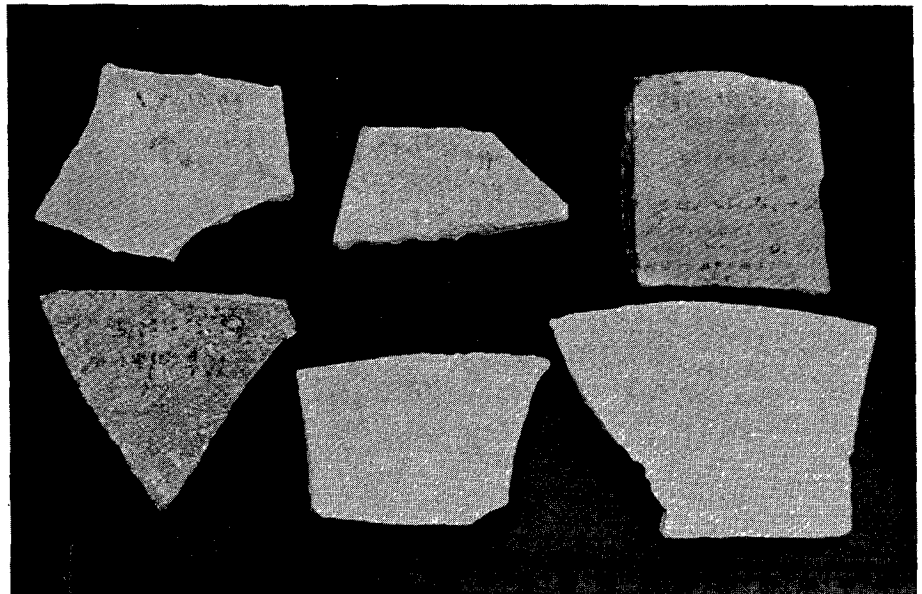
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Archeological News



Map, series of towns discovered in Dead Sea basin in 1973.

Photo, six ostraca recently discovered at Khirbet el-Kom near Hebron in Palestine. For their significance, see the accompanying text. The bilingual referred to is in the upper right.



L. T. GERATY

THOSE who desire to keep abreast of new developments in archeology may be interested in a brief report of the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and its progeny, the American Schools of Oriental Research, both of which met in Washington, D.C., October 24-27, 1974.

Abraham and Moses

Among the many scholarly papers read at the SBL, those which related recent findings of archeology to the Bible included the following: Walter E. Rast, of Valparaiso University, reported a series of towns in the southern Dead Sea basin that were found in 1973 to contain contemporary pottery and a similar cultural tradition through the end of the Early Bronze Age (c. nineteenth century B.C.), and suggested that since the towns were apparently linked in a single politico-economic system, they could conceivably reflect the background of the pentapolis (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar) mentioned in the Abraham-Melchizedek story

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of Genesis 14. Though there are now certain chronological difficulties, his hypothesis may yet prove to be valid.

Joe D. Seger, of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (Los Angeles), reported on the discovery of letters from the Proto-Sinaitic alphabet used as potters' marks on the shoulders of some large stone jars well sealed under debris from the final destruction of Middle Bronze Age Gezer (c. sixteenth century B.C.). These are of special interest because they compare in form and date to the alphabetic inscriptions found on the Sinai Peninsula. Together these data show that, contrary to the opinion of earlier critics, alphabetic writing existed in the time of Moses; only thus could his Torah have become a people's book.

Israelites and Edomites

Joseph A. Callaway, of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, described the pattern of life from the Iron I Age (or the Biblical period of the Judges) discovered at the small unfortified villages of Ai and Raddana, which he has excavated during the past ten years. Repre-

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sentative of the general settlement of the central hill country of Palestine, the evidence suggests that the inhabitants (presumably Israelites) were primarily farmers and secondarily shepherds; they had capability in metal working, and their houses were characterized by a new pier technique of construction. Such discoveries help to provide a backdrop for the book of Judges.

Lawrence T. Geraty, of Andrews University, discussed the significance for Biblical studies of six ostraca he discovered in 1971 at Khirbet el-Kom (in the Shephelah). Coming from the archives of an Idumaeen moneylender and dating from the early third century B.C., they were either in Aramaic script/Edomite language or Greek, and one, being a bilingual ostrakon, was in both. The earliest indigenous Greek inscriptions from Palestine, they show how early Greek language and influence pervaded everyday life and thus provide an early antecedent for the situation in the time of Jesus and His disciples. Since the moneylender is referred to in Greek as a *kapēlos*, additional light may be thrown on the usage of this word in Isaiah 1:22 (LXX) and 2 Corinthians 2:17. Finally, the inscriptions are important for Biblical text-criticism because they are the first secure exemplars of the scripts probably used by the earliest Septuagint translators of the Hebrew Bible.

Jesus, Ezra, and Nehemiah

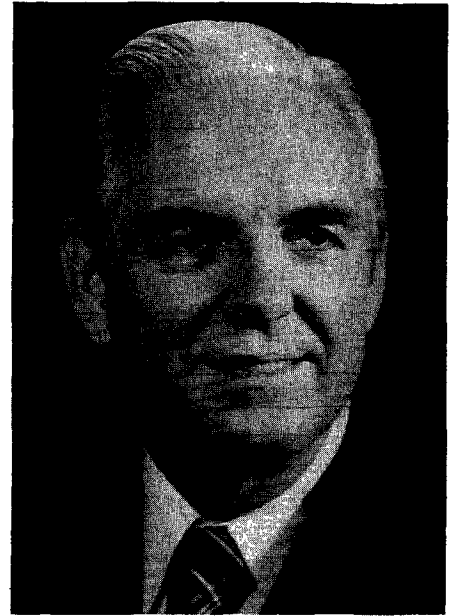
Eric M. Meyers, of Duke University, synthesized results from a recent archeological survey of Galilee with the results of recent excavations at Khirbet Shema, Meiron, Chorazin, Capernaum, and Beth Shearim, to suggest that Galilee must be divided into Upper and Lower Galilee following a line that runs east from Akko on the coast to Safad. In New Testament times Upper Galilee appears

to have been a primitive and conservative hinterland removed from foreign influences (the traditional view of Galilee), but Lower Galilee appears to have been far more Hellenized than has been previously supposed. Since the latter region was the locus of Jesus' Galilean ministry, it now seems probable that He grew up and worked in a very sophisticated and cosmopolitan society.

In his presidential address to the SBL, "A Reconstruction of the Judaeen Restoration," Frank M. Cross, Jr., of Harvard University, came out strongly for the traditional dating of the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah as opposed to alternate views that have become popular in critical circles; he used as evidence (along with other archeological data) the genealogical information found in new fourth-century B.C. papyri from Wadi ed-Daliyeh north of Jericho. These papyri, left in a cave by Samaritan patricians fleeing from the conquest of Alexander the Great, will be published shortly in the *Annual* of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

Illustrated "Dig" Reports

At the ASOR meeting, always one of the best attended of the many sessions, illustrated reports of ASOR-sponsored archeological expeditions were presented by their respective directors: the Phoenician city of Idalian (in Cyprus) by Lawrence E. Stager, of the Oriental Institute; the Byzantine churches in the vicinity of Amman (in Jordan) by Bastiaan Van Elderen, of Calvin Theological Seminary; the Old Testament city of Heshbon (in Jordan) by Lawrence T. Geraty, of Andrews University; the New Testament city of Caesarea (in Israel) by Robert J. Bull, of Drew University; the Jewish synagogue site at Meiron (in Israel) by Eric M. Meyers, of Duke University; and the Early Christian sites of the Aegean (in Greece



G. Ernest Wright

and Turkey) by Helmut Koester, of Harvard Divinity School.

Especially missed at the ASOR meetings was its president, G. Ernest Wright, of Harvard University, who died suddenly of a heart attack on August 29, 1974, shortly after he returned from a trip to the Middle East, where he had visited most of the "digs" mentioned above. Professor Wright's colleague at Harvard, Frank M. Cross, Jr., was elected to succeed him as ASOR president. He is thus charged with the general oversight of ASOR's excavations, publications (*The Biblical Archaeologist*, *The Newsletter*, and *The Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*), and institutions (The Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, The American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, and the planned institutions in Baghdad, Beirut, Nicosia, and Tunis).

The next annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Research and the American Schools of Oriental Research is scheduled for October 30-November 2, 1975, at the Palmer House in Chicago, Illinois. 