JOURNAL

OF

BIBLICAL LITERATURE

Volume XXX | Part I | 1911

On the Archæological Exploration of Palestine

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, 1910

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THIS paper is limited to the exploration which is carried on by the excavator. It does not deal with topographical nor geographical studies, except as these may be advanced by the work of the excavator. Not that such studies have by any means exhausted their subject, nor even that much territory does not still remain to be conquered, but the limit set for this paper is necessary in the interest of greater definiteness and fullness, and is demanded by the relative importance of excavation.

Nor in this narrower sense of exploration is it my aim to give primarily a historical sketch, but rather to present along with a condensed review such practical observations as are suggested by the general theme.

Like a large portion of the rest of Western Asia, Palestine is dotted with the sites of ancient human occupation. These sites are mounds, called *tells*, often rising out of the level plain, more often perched on the side or the top of a hill, a natural water supply and a regard to safety determining in most cases the selection of the site.

In size these tells vary from a few hundred feet to a

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couple of miles in circumference. To the untrained eye they resemble natural hills, but often a plateau at the top suggests their artificial character. Many of these tells have a history dating from the earliest occupation of the land. Some of the more important have been continuously occupied under the successive masters of the land, while others have been occupied at certain periods only. The history of these occupations is written in the tells in the remains of houses, weapons, ornaments, and utensils, especially pottery. So far as not disturbed by subsequent digging, as in laying house foundations, these remains are deposited in regular strata, varying in thickness with the length and character of the successive occupations. The total accumulation of *débris* varies from a few feet to sixty feet or more.

Many of these tells retain the names of the ancient cities but slightly changed, as Ta'annek, Dôtân, Erîkhâ, Anâtâ, Seilun; others are known by translations of the older name, as Tell el-Ḳadi for Dan; while in some cases the ancient name has been shifted to some spot on or near the tell. In many cases there is no connection between the modern local name and the ancient name of the tell. That is to say, there are many unidentified Biblical sites, and there are many old tells whose ancient names remain unknown. In cases where the natural interest in a place has preserved an unbroken tradition there is, of course, no uncertainty, as in the case of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Samaria, Nazareth, and Tiberias.

The archæological exploration of these tells is subject to natural and artificial limitations.

Such parts of the sites as are occupied by houses still in use, or by cemeteries, can, of course, not be excavated, and where there is a modern village there is sure to be a cemetery beside it. The season for work is the summer, when no rain falls, extending from April to October; but in the Jordan valley, owing to the great heat, only a few weeks in the early spring and the late autumn are really available. The explorer is much hampered by the ignorance, supersti-

tion, and trickery of the natives, who believe that he is digging for treasure, and who invent and circulate for selfish ends the most absurd reports. And while these natives can be trained to efficiency in the use of their own simple utensils, it is very difficult to make them effective users of improved modern tools.

But the greatest obstruction to exploration is the severity of the Turkish law relating to antiquities. Between the application and the granting of permission to excavate the delay may run into years. For a part of this delay the local authorities are responsible, to whom is first submitted the question as to the feasibility of exploration. The permit finally granted, the explorer has to make his terms with the natives, paying them for the olive and other trees which must be cut down, and for the loss in crops during the years of excavation, for all of which the natives have most exaggerated ideas. The explorer must, when his permit expires, restore cultivated lands to a state of cultivation, save in the case of remains too large for removal and too important to cover over again, the damages in this case to be paid to the landowners by the central government. Nothing which is found may be taken away by the explorer, but everything is the property of the government, and must be turned over to the commissioner, to be sent, at the explorer's expense, to the Imperial Museum at Constantinople. These commissioners, one of whom attends each excavation, are functionaries of great importance, and they can do much to further or hinder the success of the explorer.

But in spite of the limitations which I have described, and which apply to all parts of Turkey, the explorer in Palestine has certain compensations not enjoyed by his brother in most other parts of the empire. These come from his proximity to post offices, physicians, and the sources of supply.

Another great compensation comes from his contact with the modern life of the land. In spite of change in government and population, the conditions of life in Palestine to-day are not essentially different from what they were in

the days of Isaiah or Paul. To be a constant observer of the ever varying picture of this life, already familiar from the Bible, is a perpetual charm and source of instruction.

The chief motive which prompts to Palestinian study in all its phases is religious and Biblical. This has been so in the past, is now, and is likely to continue. As the tourist goes to that country for religious quickening or for confirmation and elucidation of the Scriptures, so the student is moved by the same motive.

But along with this is now another strong motive, the scientific, the desire to do for the literature, art, and life of Palestine the same service that archæology is rendering to the peoples of Rome, Greece, and Egypt. The religious spirit is not necessarily scientific. But the scientific spirit pursues its ends with a devotion as real and as ardent as that exhibited by religion. Indeed, it makes even religion, of every possible form and phase, one of the objects of its investigation.

The scientific spirit, recognizing, as it cannot fail to do, the great *rôle* played by Palestine in the history of western civilization, especially through the writers, characters, and doctrines of the Bible, shuns no task which may serve to shed fresh light upon this subject. It does not feel that everything is explained by the statement that the Hebrews were the bearers of a special revelation to mankind, or that they were in some way endowed beyond other men for the perception and enforcement of religious truth. It may, indeed, grant both of these claims, and still believe that much remains to be learned as to the method by which these results were achieved. It recognizes that the thought, as well as the outward life of Israel, must have been deeply influenced by preceding and contemporary forces, and is persuaded that we have much to learn from the study of Israel's relations to the contemporary powers. It grants heartily the notion of native endowment, but inquires why such endowment takes a particular form. It does not hope ever to lay bare the secret springs of the nation's life,

but it is convinced that we are far from knowing all that may be learned about them.

The history contained in the Bible is but a fragment, and archæology is sure that exploration will make this fragment more intelligible, and by the discovery of new facts will help us to understand much that is now obscure.

To pass in review with minute details the work which has been done by the excavator in Palestine would on this occasion be tedious and out of place; but a general sketch may not seem inappropriate. Through the society known as the Palestine Exploration Fund, England was for a long time almost alone in the cultivation of this field, though America has been a generous supporter of the society. The work of captains Charles W. Wilson and Charles Warren at Jerusalem; of W. M. Flinders Petrie at Tell el-Hesy; of Frederick J. Bliss at the same spot; of Bliss and Archibald C. Dickie at Jerusalem; of Bliss and R. A. Stewart Macalister at Tell Zakariyah, Tell es-Safi, Tell ej-Judeideh and Tell Sandahannah; and of Macalister at Abu Shusheh, — this work has been fully reported in the Quarterly Statement and in special publications of the society. It has all been confined to Jerusalem, and to the region west and southwest of that city.

The Germans and Austrians were next to enter the field with the excavation of Tell Ta'annek by Ernst Sellin of Vienna; of Tell el-Mutesellim by Gottlieb Schumacher; of Tell Hum and other points in Galilee by the German Orient Society; and of Jericho by Professor Sellin. The last excepted, these places are all in the middle and northern part of the land.

The Americans took up the work in 1908. In this year Harvard University began the exploration of Samaria, with the financial support of the Hon. Jacob H. Schiff. The field director for the first year was Gottlieb Schumacher, and for the second and third years George A. Reisner.

In the most recent years very considerable excavation has been carried on by the Franciscans on their property outside the walls of Jerusalem.

In this review I have not included certain small undertakings, like that of Hermann Guthe at Jerusalem in 1880, nor the illegitimate but widespread exploitation of the tombs by the peasants. This exploitation has brought to light and dissipated great quantities of pottery, ornaments, weapons, and utensils, but the absence of intelligent observers, and the impossibility of gaining reliable information, rob this work almost entirely of scientific value.

Along with these excavations, which began with that of Warren at Jerusalem in 1867, and even antedating them, have gone the splendid work of the travelers, like Edward Robinson and H. V. Guérin, and the great "Survey" conducted by the Palestine Exploration Fund. And there have been founded at Jerusalem three schools for the study of Palestine — that of the Dominicans, with a theological faculty and an excellent Biblical Review; the German Evangelical Institute; and our own School of Oriental Study and Research. These works and these schools are doing much to extend and deepen interest in the study of Palestine, and the schools could by adequate support easily do much more.

But this historical outline of the excavations would be of little moment, if we did not at once proceed to the question, What have we learned by the considerable expenditure of time and money?

This question may be answered from two points of view. In the first place we may compare the results with those obtained by excavation in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia. In these countries the revelations have been spectacular in the extreme. Great empires, mighty dynasties, with their palaces and temples, their gods and their libraries, their treasures of art and of literature, have risen from the sleep of centuries. Thousands of private persons, with their manners and customs, their costumes and their trade relations, their business and their beliefs, have risen to fullness of life in the valley of dry bones. Hundreds of thousands of books written on materials almost imperishable have yielded up the records committed to their keeping.

All this is so wonderful because only a century ago it was almost entirely unknown to the modern world. Indeed, it would seem to have been but slightly known to what until recent times we had been accustomed to regard as the ancient world; I mean to the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans. Or if known to them, not much of that knowledge has survived till our own day.

Such revelations of a new world could manifestly not be expected in Palestine, for the reason that we know, in outline at least, the leading characters and movements in Hebrew history, including perhaps the name of every king who sat on the throne of Israel or of Judah. And the fact that different writing material was used in Palestine makes it improbable that archæology can ever reveal the life of the people in such detail as in Babylon and Assyria.

Or the answer to our question as to results may, in the second place, be given without any regard to the astonishing revelations made by the explorer and the decipherer elsewhere. While the yield, viewed on its own merits, will appear modest, it will not seem so modest as it would by the comparisons suggested.

Before going into details let me mention a few discoveries, important for the history of Palestine, made on foreign soil.

The chief of these come from Babylon and Assyria. The statements of Tiglathpileser as to his wars against Israel and Damascus, and of Sennacherib regarding his campaign against Hezekiah, were a most welcome confirmation of the Biblical narrative. Shalmaneser's account of his defeat of Ahab in battle, and of the tribute paid him by Jehu, put us in possession of two facts in Hebrew history otherwise unknown.[1] The Mesha inscription found in Moab, not indeed by excavation but by travel, supplements in a most interesting way the Biblical account of the relations of Moab to Israel in the days of Omri and Ahab, while those cuneiform letters found at El-Amarna in 1887 greatly enlarge our

[1] These are indeed facts of prime importance because they provide the earliest definite dates in Hebrew history.

knowledge of conditions in Palestine at a period slightly antedating the occupation of the land by the Hebrews.

There are few individual discoveries made within the borders of Palestine itself which in importance can compete with those just mentioned.

The first great step of advance was the determination by Petrie in 1890 of the relative ages of pottery found in the mound of Tell el-Hesy or Lachish. The successive layers of *débris* show corresponding changes in the pottery, its general shape, the form of the bottom, the treatment of the handle, the neck and rim or lip, the ornamentation by indenting or by colors arranged in bands, stripes, zigzags, or geometrical forms. Petrie's conclusions were in part based on a comparison of Tell el-Hesy pottery with corresponding forms of dated pottery in Egypt and elsewhere, and were supported by his discovery of a cuneiform tablet belonging to the El-Amarna period. The application of his conclusions by Bliss, Macalister, and others, while resulting in modification in details, confirms the general correctness of the system. In the absence of inscriptions the importance of this means of dating the strata of *débris* is obvious. This is a test which may and must be used by all explorers. By its application it is now possible in undisturbed *débris* to know definitely whether one is working in Roman, Seleucidan, Israelitish, or Canaanite levels. And even in disturbed *débris* one can often assign the intermingled fragments of pottery to their respective periods. This key is also of great value in deciding the age of tombs cut in the rock and not buried beneath accumulations of rubbish.

Let us turn to particulars, and ask first what we have learned from work in the Canaanite level. This level has been penetrated at Lachish, Taanach, Megiddo, Gezer, Jericho, and other points. We know now of the broad and high walls of stone surrounding the ancient cities, of the stone houses with small rooms, of the standing columns which were the essential feature of the "high places," of the methods of burial, of the religious beliefs, of the animals used, of the kinds of food eaten, of the intercourse with the

outer world, especially Egypt and the Ægean, of the weapons, utensils, and adornments used, and of the attainments made in art. By the examination of skeletons, especially of skulls, found at Gezer, Mr. Macalister has made a beginning in the ethnological study of the Canaanites. No native writing from the period has been found, but only writing in the Babylonian script, at Lachish and at Taanach, and writing on such imported objects as scarabs from Egypt. The marks simulating writing on scarabs of native origin seem to be the work of those who had no script of their own.

The total impression of the Canaanites as made known in their remains agrees with the picture given in the Old Testament and in the El-Amarna letters. We can now understand better than before how they maintained themselves so long against the invading Israelites, how their religious customs were adopted by the invaders, and how the two peoples intermingled and intermarried on so large a scale.

This gradual merging of Canaanites into Israelites carried with it as a consequence the gradual passing of one period into the other, as represented in the *débris*. While certain older types of pottery and utensils persisted for a while, other types specifically Israelitish were developed, and these may also be recognized by the specialist.

The period of Hebrew material greatness, if such expression be legitimate at all, was brief, covering the four centuries of the monarchy. During this time but two cities of first importance were developed, Jerusalem and Samaria. Sites of second-rate importance, like Hebron, Shechem, Jezreel. Tirzah, Bethel, Dan, Beersheba, have not been touched by the excavator. The great mass of exploration has been conducted at sites which are indeed of much consequence for the Canaanite period, but only of third-rate importance for that of the Hebrews, so far at least as we may judge from the Old Testament. We can therefore not wonder if such sites have not been specially rich in remains of the Hebrew period.

Of the two chief Hebrew sites Jerusalem comes first, but the amount of excavation which has been possible within the

city wall is altogether too meager to reveal the artistic and literary remains of Hebrew origin which lie buried deep beneath the present level.

At Samaria the conditions are more favorable. Save the village and the cemetery which cover the eastern side of this vast mound, there is no encumbrance too great to be removed by money. Sufficient money might even remove all the houses of the village, except the mosque. Jerusalem being for the present inaccessible to the spade, Samaria has long been recognized as the most promising site for the explorer.

The excavation carried on at Samaria during the past three summers, though it has not touched a twentieth part of the enclosure, can show results of the first importance for the life of the ancient Hebrews. In the higher levels of the *débris* are the ruins of the constructions of Herod the Great, who rebuilt the place in honor of Augustus, and gave to it the name which the village still perpetuates. Underneath the Roman are found the ruins of the Seleucid era; underneath these are those of the Babylonian-Assyrian period; and lowest of all the great palace built on the hill by Omri, enlarged by his son Ahab, still further enlarged at a later period, perhaps, as Professor Reisner suggests, by Jeroboam the Second. The excellent workmanship of the Ahab palace, as seen in the well-cut and well-joined blocks of stone, is not surpassed by that of Herod or of his Seleucid predecessors. We know now that prosperous kings like Ahab lived in large, well-built houses of stone, and we can understand as never before the prophetic descriptions of the wealth and luxury of Samaria.

Along with this palace have come to light the remains of houses of humbler character, and fragments innumerable of the pottery vessels made and used by the ancient Hebrews. The palace itself with its enlargements gives us an entirely new conception of Israelitish architecture, and its discovery marks a new epoch.

Of even greater consequence are some inscriptions found on the floor level of a storehouse attached to the palace

of Ahab. These are dated by the place of discovery and by proximity to an alabaster vase inscribed with the name of Ahab's contemporary, Osorkon the Second of Egypt. The inscriptions, written in the Hebrew language on potsherds, give us the names of two score or more of the private men of Ahab's time, and incidentally, through the proper names, most interesting light on the religion of that period. Being very early specimens of alphabetic writing, the inscriptions are of great interest in connection with the history of the alphabet. Moreover, this discovery settles forever the question whether writing was common in Israel in the early days of the monarchy. And if then, doubtless still earlier. The flowing hand in which these ostraca are written, with its graceful curves, attests long acquaintance with writing and much practice of the art.

In one particular Samaria is a spot specially favorable for exploration. There is no evidence of its occupation in the Canaanite period, and the bottom level of the *débris* is accordingly pure Israelitish. This agrees with the narrative of its original occupation by Omri, who seems to have found the hill an unoccupied field.

In the nature of the case, we are unable to point to definite Hebrew works of importance in Israel after the fall of Samaria, but traces of the Assyrian occupation are probably seen in certain walls, and certainly seen in fragments of two cuneiform inscriptions found on the spot, one in 1909 and one in 1910.

Even in Judah after 722 there was a great limitation of power, due to Assyrian aggression. Other matters than building operations absorbed the chief thought of the leaders. Foreign invasions and religious reforms were the order of the day.

From the Greek era we have in Palestine the small Seleucid town of Sandahannah, dug out by Dr. Bliss, with its streets and houses, and a considerable number of Greek inscriptions on stone, a discovery of no inconsiderable interest for the Maccabean era of Jewish history.

From the Roman period there are, besides the imposing

remains at Samaria already spoken of, the ruins of synagogues in Galilee. The exhumation of one of these by the Germans at Tell Hum reveals a large and handsome building, which was elaborately decorated with carving, the designs being drawn from the foliage of vines and trees.

It may seem surprising that one should be unable to report the discovery of the name of any Hebrew king. There is one possible exception. At Megiddo was found a Hebrew seal with a lion carved in the Assyrian style, and on the seal the name of the owner, Shema, who is called the servant of Jeroboam. It seems not unlikely that this Jeroboam is one of the two Israelitish kings who bore that name.

This leads naturally to the question, Why is it that Assyria and Babylon give us such large numbers of inscriptions and art remains and the Palestine of Hebrew history so few?

We may answer in general that the Babylonians and Assyrians were a much richer people, with a vastly longer history, that they were artistically more highly endowed, had a more developed material civilization, that the materials which they used were more durable, and that the mounds have been less disturbed by later occupation than have been those of Palestine.

Artistically the peoples of Palestine have not been richly endowed. Add to this the fact that all Hebrew buildings have been destroyed by war, fire, earthquake, and, worst of all, by the re-use of the material for later constructions. What exists, therefore, is but a scant fraction of what was, reduced for the most part, if we may judge from Samaria, to the foundations, or at most to these and a few of the courses of cut stone.

The contrast of Palestine proper with the region east of the Jordan is instructive. Beyond the Jordan, at some of the more important sites, as at Gerash and 'Amman, the ruins seem till recently to have suffered but little, save by the course of natural decay. Now, however, they are fast falling a prey to the new population. At Palestinian sites, on the other hand, which have been occupied by a settled

population more continuously, the buildings have suffered more at the hands of man than from the elements.

As to lack of sculpture in Palestine, the absence of artists and of good stone will account in the main perhaps for this. But that is not the whole story. In the Græco-Roman age there was certainly good statuary, as there were fine products of ceramic art, at Samaria. These have perished, and largely from the iconoclastic methods born of the religious scruples of the Hebrews. We read, too, how the Hebrews waged war against the altars and the gods made by the Canaanites and by themselves.

Grave robbery has been a most potent means in obscuring from us the attainment of the Hebrews in art. Naturally articles in the precious metals and in costly stone were the first to be taken away. Then followed the pottery, the weapons, and the plainer forms of personal adornment. An unrifled Hebrew cemetery has not been seen by an explorer. Such tombs probably exist, and when they are found they may require a complete revision of our notions regarding Hebrew art.

The fortunes of war must also be reckoned with in accounting for the destruction of works of art among the Hebrews. Palace and temple were robbed by the invader, or even by native kings to buy off the invader.

When we ask about records in writing, we have to face the probability that the Hebrews used mainly perishable material. The limestone of the country, though abundant and easily cut, disintegrates readily. Leather, parchment, and papyrus have, of course, all perished. But we know that writing was abundant. And from Jeremiah (32 14) we learn that important documents were preserved in earthen vessels. Is it too much to hope that even perishable materials thus protected have resisted the touch of time? The work at Samaria has taught us that potsherds were also used for records. These are of the same nature as the tablets of the Assyrian scribes. The ink is less durable, it is true, than cuneiform impressions, but here again we learn from Samaria what resisting power the ink employed in Ahab's day possessed.

All this is leading up to the suggestion that much of our ignorance regarding Hebrew art and records may be due not to their having never existed, or to their complete destruction, but to our not yet having had the good fortune to ferret them out in their safe hiding places. It seems incredible that the Ahab ostraca could have been the only kind of record current in his day. And why suppose that these alone have survived the wreck of time?

Much has been done by the excavator in Palestine, but by no means so much as has been hoped. May we in view of the past continue to hope, and if so, for what?

The exploration of the remains of fortresses and churches left by Crusaders has hardly had a beginning.

Of the exhumation of synagogues, so important for the history of Judaism and the early church, but a bare beginning has been made.

Such great remains of the Roman period as Banias, Cæsarea, Jericho, the Frank Mountain, Archelais, Masada, are still untouched by the explorer.

The discovery at Taanach and Lachish of cuneiform tablets belonging to the El-Amarna period encourages the belief that considerable collections of such tablets are still awaiting the discoverer. And in view of the fragments of the later Assyrian period, found at Gezer and Samaria, who could despair of similar tablets better preserved and in larger number still to be found?

As for Hebrew material, which we desire above all else, the results at Samaria are most encouraging. Here in all probability Hebrew houses exist in a better state of preservation than Ahab's palace. The same may be said of Jezreel and other sites.

And what literary treasures may not be awaiting their fortunate discoverer! Is it too much to hope that we may yet possess in their original form some of those royal annals to which the compilers of the book of Kings refer? And can any literary discovery be imagined which would send a greater thrill through the world of to-day?

For the attainment of these hopes certain things are needed which we do not yet have in sufficient quantity. First among these may be named a propaganda which shall publish widely the results already attained, and thus win an ever-widening circle of friends.

Money is needed, of course, and needed in large sums, if work commensurate with the importance of the subject is to be done. For the raising of this money the last thing in the world which we should expect is that the explorer himself should devote any part of his energy to the task. Nor should he have to feel under the necessity of annually proving to his supporters that the work of the season has been successful. Of course all parties are happier if this can be shown. But excavation is like the lottery. There are many blanks, and the great prizes are few. All that can properly be demanded of the explorer is that he do his work thoroughly and well.

Money in adequate amount being taken for granted, one of the first changes to be made in excavation relates to method. A site once attacked should be thoroughly explored. This has thus far been the case in no single instance. In some cases the amount of work done at a site has been a caricature of excavation. This has not been the wish of the explorer, but a condition thrust upon him by the inadequacy of the means at his disposal. Of course not every site, in the present state of our knowledge of Palestine, deserves an exhaustive examination. But every site which seems worth touching at all should be tested at so many points and so thoroughly as to leave no doubt concerning the character of the material buried in the mound.

Next to the need of money is the need of trained experts in the field. Much good work has been done in exploration all over the ancient world by men whose chief equipment was their enthusiasm and their interest in the subject. But much harm has also been done along with the good. Ignorance or improper methods may result in irreparable harm at any given site. Archæology is now a science, with work in the field as one of its branches. Such work should be

prepared for by long and earnest study, and by an apprenticeship under supervision in the field.

What is obviously true of archæology in general is particularly true of conditions in Palestine. Here the problem is complex in the extreme, owing to the occupation of sites by successive populations and to the peculiar experiences which have befallen the country.

As between no work and the kind of work which has been done by untrained hands the latter is, of course, infinitely better. Without it we should still be largely dependent on literary sources for our knowledge of antiquity. All honor to the men who, inadequately equipped and inadequately supported, have done so great a service to the cause of learning.

But now that a better way has become clear, and the importance of excavation is seen by many minds, the duty of the hour is to arrange for large enterprises under the best possible conditions.

Perhaps coöperation between learned bodies, societies, museums, and universities, or even international coöperation, is advisable. The prime motive, the advance of knowledge, is in all cases the same. The powerful motive of the enrichment of our museums can, owing to the Turkish law relating to antiquities, have only a secondary place.

The body of scholars whose names are enrolled in this Society feel perhaps more keenly than any other body in America the value of exploration in Palestine. But as a society our interest has not been so manifest as that of the English Palestine Exploration Fund or the German Orient Society. I do not forget that the School in Jerusalem, though now fostered mainly by the Archæological Institute of America, is a creation of this Society, and that one of the reasons for its creation was archæological exploration. That this end may be achieved let us not fail to support the movement for the endowment of the School. Properly housed and endowed this School might become one of the most powerful agents for the exploration of Palestine.

There are eager young men awaiting the slightest encouragement to devote their lives to the work of excavation. Let us believe in the subject heartily ourselves, and sooner or later the money and the men will be found to realize our dreams.