PERSUASIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGY:
The achievements and grandeur of the Omrids
at their royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel

by

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ABSTRACT

Our perception, of the Omrid kings of the Kingdom of Israel in the ninth century BCE, is based on the Books of 1 and 2 Kings in the Hebrew Bible. The Biblical author's concentration, on Omrid apostasy rather than on their abilities and accomplishments, has robbed these competant monarchs of the prominence allotted to kings like David and Solomon. Recent archaeological excavations, in conjunction with extra-Biblical sources, have however projected a different image. Excavations at the royal Omrid cities of Samaria, and especially Jezreel, have indicated that Omri, and his son Ahab, had erected immense and grandiose structures. These edifices bear testimony to periods of peace, stability and great economic prosperity. The Omrids deserve new assessments as to their accomplishments, and therefore, by means of visible and tangible structural remains, I wish to promote the persuasion of archaeology as vindication of Omrid grandeur and achievement at Samaria and Jezreel.

KEYWORDS: Palestine, Moab Stone, Qarqar, Monolith Inscription, Phoenicians, Ivories, Deuteronomist, masonry, fortifications, casemate walls.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 INTRODUCTION

The Oxford dictionary defines *GRANDEUR* and *ACHIEVEMENT* as 'planned on large scale, imposing' and 'accomplish, attain' respectively. To assign these definitions to a person or period is to place them squarely on the map of fame, or infamy, as the case may be.Any allocations though, imply that some measure of knowledge or research, and the subsequent interpretation thereoff, had taken place in order to reach a final conclusion. Thorough research, especially in the field of archaeology, therefore takes into account many and varied disciplines, which would include expertise in such fields as chemistry, geography, anthropology, metallurgy, philology, history, et cetera. An archaeological example of such expertise would be that of petrography. This science entails the examination of thin slices of pottery under the microscope, in order to assess the physical composition of the clay (Mazar 1990:27). The data, retrieved from the examination, can be used to set the clay pottery in its correct context (place of origin, cultural background and the trade relations which had facilitated such an exchange).

However, before any such practices can be applied, the most important factor of all must be present namely, that of a genuine curiosity, one which strives to find out the why events happened, and how their human participants, whether they be kings or peasants reacted. From such a combination of curiosity and research, hopefully, a mindset emerges which can view any findings, results and conclusions as objectively as possible. Total objectivity is not always achievable, since the availability of sources, and our selective application of them, often act as a medium towards subjective interpretation. Inevitably our own cultural background and 'worldview' influence our interpretations, because 'We like a certain kind of history because it is our history'(Dever 1996:37 (in Shanks interview)).

But, any unbiased curiosity will be of great help towards an understanding of that which had happened in the past, so long ago. Such an understanding is especially important, and very necessary, when one's research delves into a past, such as that of Israel. That past has come down to us mainly by means of the Biblical text, and religious perceptions and presentations were then often not in tune with the changing face of social, economical and political (as well

as religious) realities. It is thus necessary that '...the events of Scripture must be studied in the context of the history of many races and movements, political, economic, and cultural, over two millennia' (Gray 1962:3).

When we read the Old Testament books of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles, we meet the kings of the United as well as the Divided Kingdoms. But, we meet these kings *via* the biblical writers, who gave full attention to matters which were central to their theological interests, rather than to matters which were crucial towards an understanding of the past (Miller 1987:2). Consequently the kings are introduced against a background of religious tenets and judgements. Reading about the reign of Omri (885/884-874/873 BCE, Thiele 1983:217) and his establishment of a new capital city, Samaria (1 Ki 16:15-28), we can deduce that his accession was an important turning point in the history of both Israel and Judah (Miller1987:2).

The Deuteronomistic historian, however, deemed the reign and achievements of both Omri and his son, Ahab (874/873-853 BCE, Thiele 1983:217), as unimportant, when set against his viewpoint about their continuation of the cultic policies which Jeroboam 1 had initiated (1 Ki 12:28). These policies, according to the Deuteronomistic perspective, had led to the final downfall of the Northern Kingdom (Miller 1987:2). In practice of course, it was impossible for any ruler to operate solely within a context of religious service, since they were part and parcel of the secular realities of the world in which they lived and their commitment was also to the economic prosperity and political stability of their kingdom. And that is the context within which the extent of Omrid deeds should be considered.

It is due to the realities behind this dual world of sacred and secular, as well as the Biblical condemnations of the Omrid dynasty, that I propose to apply the discipline of archaeology as a means towards a visible and tangible representation of Omrid achievements. The monumental remains which were excavated at Samaria (palaces, buildings, walls) and Jezreel (walls, towers), reflect a power base which had the necessary wealth and manpower with which to accomplish these building projects. The archaeological remains do not only represent 'stone upon stone', but by implication speak of a period of peace and stability, and of effective government and great prosperity. They also project a preparedness in the event of a confrontation or war with

neighbouring countries. The Biblical paucity on Omri, and the severity with which Ahab has been treated, fail to give credit to these monarchs for any such achievements. In 1 Kings 22:39 only very brief mention is made of the 'ivory house' and the 'cities ' which Ahab had built.

Although extra-Biblical sources do give information, such as for instance the Monolith Inscription (see illustration 3) regarding the Omrids, these types of sources are so far and between that we need a more substantial body of evidence to work with. And it is here that the archaeological spade can fill the gap. Hence my proposal to use this medium, as an instrument of persuasion, towards a realisation of the grandeur and achievements of the Omrids at Samaria and Jezreel. To persuade successfully means that the evidence used - in our case archaeological discoveries - can prove themselves adequately enough so as to induce a conviction of their contribution towards the greatness of the Omrids.

However, archaeology cannot stand on its own, since much that is found must be interpreted, and thus we have, of necessity, to use Biblical sources in conjunction with archaeology. But, as Dever said in an interview with Hershel Shanks: 'Archaeologists and Historians must read between the lines, to look not only at what the Biblical writers say, but at what they allude to, what they avoid saying'(Dever 1996 (5):35). Take for instance the following: *SHEMER'S* estate (1 Ki 17:24), the *MARRIAGE* of Jezebel to Ahab (1 Ki 16:31), and the *HOUSES / BEDS* of *IVORY* (Am 3:15; 6:4). These examples have inherent information, bringing to the fore the practical, real and tangible world in which the Omrids lived. Shemer's estate became a new city, Samaria, a reality consisting of many factors, such as choice of site, defence possibilities, water supply, building projects, labour, payments and material. Marriage to a kings's daughter, from a rich and mercantile city such as Sidon, had not only certain political implications, but also the benefit of reciprocal trade and the economical wealth such trade generated. If we temper Amos' condemnation, of the ivory houses and beds, with a sensible realization of the artistry and time involved in the creation of objects of art from ivory, we shall still find a connotation of wealth and indulgence, but also a sense of appreciation for the employment of such artists and their craft. The Omrid kings lived royally, surrounding themselves with the luxuries which power can bring, and which they deemed to be their right. Neighbouring kings, to the north, south and east of them, did exactly the same.

Glimpses of those royal worlds came slowly to light, when Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) was amongst the first to recognize the significance of the tells in Palestine. Proof of this significance was realized through excavations at these tells and the exciting discoveries made there. The objects and structures which were found brought added insight into the times and personalities of the Bible. Hence, each structure or item found, which can tentatively be dated to the ninth century BCE, can cast new light on the world of the Omrids. Whether they built for defensive measures or palatial living, each structure tells a story. We become aware of the implications of the building projects: the labour involved, the materials used (homegrown or imported), the taxes gathered to pay for everything and, of course, the enemies or friends, who were either to be intimidated by, or impressed with these imposing structures, whether found at Samaria, Jezreel or any other of the cities which Ahab had turned his attention to, such as Megiddo and Hazor.

In my studies of Ancient History I became acquainted with assessing these historical periods, and learned that all sources, whether primary or secondary, whether an autobiography or chronicles, inscriptions, annales and so forth, should be treated with respect and extreme circumspection. Therefore, when Biblical Archaeology became apart of my academic aspirations, I could conceive of worlds so far removed from ours. Yet, I also realized that some areas will be easy to recognize, others less easy, but the greater part will be a case of tentative interpretation, and thus of possible error.

Consequently a need is required to carefully locate one's sources within their context and only then to appraise them against all the influences which gave rise to them. And that, of course, is where the link between archaeology and religion is a controversial matter. Why? Because some archaeologists view the Bible as a lens which distorts the true image of Israel's history, whilst others go to the opposite extreme and insist on strict adherence to the biblical text as confirmation of Israel's historicity. Such contradictionary views inevitably lead to widely different interpretations which, in turn, are used to either refute or else to substantiate archaeological material as evidence for or against Scriptures.

This dissertation thus, cannot revolve only around the material remains as found at Samaria and Jezreel, or around the mentioning of them in the biblical text. The existence and grandeur

of Samaria and Jezreel will have to be presented within a setting of contextual realities. Thus to place them and their 'Omrid' sovereigns into proper perspective, I shall first discuss the geographical setting of the land of Palestine, because of its crucial position in relation to the surrounding countries. Next I shall introduce Israel's neighbours, since they played interlocking roles in the life of the Israelites, as Ahabs' involvement with Phoenicia clearly demonstrates. In order to find out what we actually know about this period in the history of Israel, I shall give an overview on the available sources, that is, Biblical, extra-Biblical and archaeological. Then I shall have to bring the Omrids onto the stage, since they are mostly remembered for misdeeds, and it is important to realize that each member was a typical embodiment of his time, and that there must have been much more than only misdeeds. The references in the biblical text, to the 'Chronicles of the Kings of Israel' (1Ki 16:27; 22:39; 2 Ki 1:18) cannot be checked, since they have never been found. We are thus committed, and limited, to the Biblical text. But, by means of our non-Biblical sources, hopefully Omrid aspirations, whether good or bad, magnificent or poorly, can be brought into perspective.

After this necessary groundwork, we shall go into the world of archaeology. This is to ascertain the means and methods of this discipline, and to realize the significance of the 'Tell' as part of the archaeological exercise. Then a short history of Samaria and Jezreel will be given, to provide a background for these royal cities. The latest archaeological reports and findings shall then be applied, to ascertain whether 'archaeological persuasions' can vindicate the grandeur and achievements of the Omrides at their royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel.

CHAPTER TWO

2 SETTINGS ARE CONTEXTUAL REALITIES

The word *SETTINGS* has various connotations, of which 'setting in place' and 'against a setting of' are the most common. Both 'settings' imply that something (object, person, event) is put amidst an existing background or scene. As a very simple (but somewhat unacademic) example will demonstrate: when I go to the supermarket, I 'set' myself in a place where canned goods and fresh produce is sold. The background to this venture consists of a brick building, factory produce, money, credit cards, cars, after-hours service and so forth. When, in 1860 AD, my great-grandmother went shopping, she 'set' herself in a grocer store, where canned goods were at a minimum, but fresh produce more readily available. Money was used, whilst transport was via donkeys or horsecarts. Back in the Medieval period my great, great ... grandmother 'set ' herself amongst homegrown stalls and homegrown produce, where little money but lots of trading took place, and maybe a donkey or two was present to carry the goods. In like manner I go back, to 885 BCE, where my great great great... grandmother will have no money, will only trade, maybe own a tired and dusty old donkey and will have a limited choice of fresh produce.

The reason for abovementioned 'settings' is that everything human and nonhuman, happens according to place, time, circumstances, actions and reactions. There is a direct connection between social and economical patterns, as well as between political and religious factors. Thus, even though my BCE grannie may not have known canned food like I do, she did and I still go out to purchase and to acquire food. I buy peeled, cut and ready to serve 'refrigerated vegies' whilst BCE grannie trades her podded beans for unwashed leeks. These she chucked, as is, into a clay pot; I stirfry mine for a few minutes. Our 'settings' are thus contextual realities, based on the time and space we occupy.

Therefore, it would be very biased, ill-informed and unfair of me, to write a book (a future source) on BCE grannie's cooking habits and to call the end product 'unfit for human consumption'. Why? Because no consideration was given to a factual 2800 year time lapse and that her kitchen was part of her context, whilst mine is of present time. Consequently I relate better to my environment than to hers, and my judgement and condemnation can easily be

applied to her cooking as one of a 'misguided and kill' method, as compared to my'modern, safe and nourishing' way of food preparation, since I have used my worldview instead of hers.

In like manner the existence and deeds of the Omrids would have been similar to those of contemporary monarchs of today, that is, be royal, live in palaces, have power and wealth. But, their contextual realities of time and space would have compelled them to approach their realities differently. Hence their realities would have been the factors which would have influenced the extent and magnitude of their deeds and acts. A combination of long time lapses and their contextual settings can thus make it very difficult to identify the past and to fathom the thought processes of long gone people. And in the case of Biblical sources this problem is further compounded by later redactions of the text which brought changes to the original characters of the Old Testament. In the chapter on sources, I shall indicate how sources can be fountains of information but how they can also be snares with 'entrapped' information. In other words, its content was taken from its original context, been changed to suit, and has now become trapped in a new context. From this point onwards it can either have stayed static, or else have been 'entrapped' several times.

Our perception of the Omrids, especially Ahab, is based largely on such entrapped information. And thus the modern historian or archaeologist should thus approach sources with '...the awareness that numerous factors will have influenced their testimony; the philosophical and theological presuppositions of the age in which they were written , their sociological origins and functions... the various changes which may have occured in the text... the specific intentions which guided their formulation....'(Miller 1987:13). This approach, to any relevant source material, could produce a better and more realistic view of these long dead monarchs and their achievements. Therefore, in order to get a picture of the whole, let us start at the very beginning, at the original 'setting' for the monarchial period of the Kingdom of Israel, namely, the actual geographical context of that kingdom.

2.1 Geographical context of Palestine

Baly (1987:5), in his introduction to his book on the geography of the Middle East, writes that it is the '...structural patterns and the landforms which have helped us to determine human movement, armies, immigrants, merchants, pilgrims et cetera - as well as the climate upon which all the natural vegetation and the land use depended, and therefore, of course, the daily life of villages, townspeople and wandering shepherds and rearers of camels'. This observation is not only a medium by which we can assess the overall geography of the lands of the Ancient East, but is especially pertinent to a small portion of that whole area, namely the land of Palestine. Let us investigate the matter more closely.

A reading, of Genesis 11:31, informs us that Abraham's family came from 'Ur of the Chaldeans'. From Ur they went up to Haran (Syria), then down south to Canaan. A famine (Gn 12:10) necessitated them to go to Egypt, to seek food for themselves and their livestock. Now, if we look at a map of the Ancient Near East, we observe that this route traces the shape of an arc which, in turn, becomes two arms enclosing the dry and arid Arabian desert in the south. Topographically thus, we have: Haran and its mountains to the North, Mesopotamia and Ur to the East, and Palestine (Canaan), the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt to the West, which form a crescent of fertile and habitable land, namely, a 'Fertile Crescent' (see map 1). Looking still closer, we see that Mesopotamia is situated between two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Egypt too has a river, the Nile, which flows through the country. Because of these geographical features, these two countries became the seats of great civilizations, due to their effective use of their rivers (irrigation, crops, harvesting, trade). Consequently each civilization was able to grow and expand economically, which inevitably led to a flow of traffic between them. Since the Arabian Desert was an obvious barrier to a direct route, the only way back and forth was through Palestine, the land that lay in the middle. And that land became a United Monarchy which eventually split into the two Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Because of their central position between the two civilizations, the two kingdoms became an integral part of their neighbouring countries and its people. This situation made them the tunnel through which all that was good, and bad, channelled itself. There was thus an intermittent flow

of either wealthy merchants and their caravans of exotic and luxury goods, or else power-hungry kings and their marauding armies. Being such a well defined geographical land bridge, every outside power sought to control this particular strip of land for its own specific needs, whilst its inhabitants sought to acquire ecomomic prosperity and to repel foreign control. To enable the kings of Israel and Judah to maintain the stability of their realms, they had to to resort to alliances, peace treaties, conquests and tributes, in order to assert the continuance of local and international connections and trade relations. This state of affairs was especially true in the case of the kingdom of Israel, since she was Palestines' northern buffer, and thus in a geographical position more vulnerable than the kingdom of Judah. She also possessed more fertile and arable land than Judah, and was thus more likely to be the first to be invaded.

However, when we read the Books of 1 & 2 Kings, we read about the United Kingdom, the subsequent Divided Kingdom and the exile to Babylon, we are exposed to the Biblical authors' viewpoint. And this viewpoint was focussed on the loyalty of the monarchs to the God of Israel, to the extent that '...one is tempted to think of Phoenicia, Philistia, Ammon, Moab and Sidon as having been marginal kingdoms....' (Miller & Hayes 1986:221). Fortunately we have extrabiblical sources such as ancient texts, inscriptions and archaeological artifacts which can be consulted, and which do interconnect the kingdom of Israel with the 'marginal kingdoms'. They provide the context within which the Omrid monarchs of the Northern Kingdom found themselves, namely , at a geographical 'point of balance' (Baly 1987:7).

These sources convey the impression that the Omrids most certainly realised the implications of this 'point of balance'. They were aware of the diversity of the adjacent kingdoms, and its peoples, and the obvious impact on all aspects of life, whether of a cultural, religious, political or economic nature they would generate. It would be unrealistic to expect that only eternal peace or constant bickering was the norm of the day. It was in a combination of abovementioned, and much more, that the course of Israel's history was dictated '... as much by the activities and demands of the nations as it was by the internal policies and aspirations of the Hebrew kings' (Payne 1981 :135). And thus Omri and Ahab allied with Phoenicia, subdued Moab and Aram, kept the trade routes open and accommodated the religious beliefs of their peoples. Simultaneously they kept themselves in readiness for the eventuality of conflict or confrontation

with these marginal kingdoms.

Such a grasp, of the realities of their times, would enable them to make use of Phoenician expertise to enhance their royal city of Samaria. And they would see to it that their other royal city, Jezreel, became a well fortified place of refuge (especially against the greedy aspirations of the Arameans). A much better grasp therefore, of the contextual realities within which the Omrids operated, is only possible if we investigate the social, economic, political and religious backgrounds of their adjoining neighbours, in order to see how these interneighbourly relationships aided in fashioning some of the policies of the Omrid kings.

2.2 Neighbours and inhabitants in context

The topography of Palestine, and its surrounds, lent itself to the development of diverse communities, whether of Israelite or of foreign origins. The most important geographical feature was the Jordan River and its valleys, since it effectively divided the land into a western portion and the Transjordan to the east (see map 2). Here the towering cliffs rise from the river edges, thus creating a natural barrier. On the eastern, Transjordanian side lay Ammon, whilst further down the rift lay Moab. Still further down south, and stretching towards the west was the dry and arid wasteland of Edom. On the western side was the definite coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. Its stretch of sandy ground ran inland until it met the central hill country, thus creating another natural 'dividing' line. Along the coastal stretch in the south, was Philistia, whilst further north, beyond Mount Carmel lay Phoenicia (Sidonia). Across from Phoenicia and over to the north-east lay Aram-Damascus (Syria). Enclosed in this geographical circle was the kingdom of Judah in the south, with the kingdom of Israel in the north. Flanking this whole area, within the north -eastern arm of the 'fertile crescent', lay Assyria, an enemy that seemed distant, but in the end was close enough to destroy Israel and to subjugate Judah. Within the other end of the 'fertile crescent', the south-western arm, lay Egypt, with its fluctuation of either conquering or dormant kingdoms.

Writing of these kingdoms bring to mind not only their geographical position and defined borders, but the fact that they had rulers, and were probably populated by inhabitants of diverse

ethnicity. Their proximity to each other would enable their boundaries to be crossed fairly easily, and intercultural, as well as confrontational exchanges could take place. It is here then, that the differences between creative or destructive powers would enable the Omrids to participate either in constructive activities or in none at all. Therefore, let us see to what extent the radical differences between the various kingdoms did in fact impact on the deeds of the Omrids.

2.2.1 The land of Ammon

Geographically Ammon formed part of the Israelite area of Gilead. Its capital was Rabbath Ammon, the 'city of waters' (2 Sm 12:27). Due to the difficult terrain, of limited fertile areas and mountainous regions, the economy remained largely pastoral (Aharoni 1979 :38). The relationship of the Ammonites with the Israelites started at the time when Moses, in order to avoid the territories of Edom and Moab, marched his army of people between the Moabite and Ammonite lands (Nm 20f). From then onwards matters between them were mostly of a nature of hostility, interspersed with periods of peace (Payne 1981:144). Saul defeated them at Jabesh-Gilead (1 Sm 11: 1-11), whilst David and Solomon managed to maintain a peaceful relationship with Ammon (2 Sm 10:1-19; 12:29; 1 Ki 11:1).

The division of the United Kingdom brought Ammon into the realm of the Northern Kingdom, but she succeeded in breaking free and in remaining independant. However, Ammon joined the coalition headed by Ahab of Israel, and Hadadezer of Damascus, against Shalmaneser III and his Assyrians at Qarqar in 853 BCE. Our knowledge of this battle is due to the extra-Biblical source, the Monolith Inscription (see illustration 3). This stele was erected by Shalmaneser to commemorate his 'victory' at Qarqar, and on this stele we find that 'Ba'asa of Ammon' is listed as being present with his troops. This was thus a significant alliance, because as a' marginal' country, Ammon's geographically position provided a buffer and protective border not only against attacks from the north, but from the south as well (Moab).

Ammon though, had a very distinctive asset, namely, the King's Highway. This highway is mentioned when Moses' envoys promises the Amorite king, Sihon: 'We will travel by the King's Highway till we have crossed your territory' (Nm 21: 22). The King's Highway was an ancient route from Damascus to Egypt, via its branches to Elath, the seaport at the southern end

of the Arabah, and to Arabia. Thus, despite Ammon's geographical limitations, her economic well-being was assured, since the kingdom's '...importance and wealth was significant for its unrivalled domination of the King's Highway' (Aharoni 1979:38). Ammon then, was a kingdom whose flourishing trade relations with other countries, as well as with Israel, could only have been beneficial to Ahab's kingdom. Simultaneously though, this highway could also be used to facilitate easy access into Israel. The Omrids, therefore, had their well fortified city, Jezreel, in place as a defensive measure against such an eventuality. Aram, the kingdom to the north, was especially keen to make use of this highway for purposes other than just commercial trade. A series of towers which were found in Ammon may indicate a defence line surrounding their capital city (Mazar 1990:542).

2.2.2 The land of Moab

As an extension, to the north of Ammon, Moab too was a mountainous area, and consequently remained virtually pastoral. Its capital, Kir-Haraseth, or Kir of Moab, was situated on the heights above the Rift valley , and was thus in an excellent position to repel attacks (Aharoni 1979 :40). The relationship between Israelites and Moabites was similar to that with Ammon, that is, one of intermittent hostility and peaceful co-existance. Under David and Solomon the united kingdom could keep control of this land. Moab also remained under Israelite domination throughout the monarchies of Omri and Ahab. This we know by means of the Moabite Stone (see illustration 2), in which we meet not only with Mesha, the king of Moab who sacrified his son to the god Kemosh (2 Ki 3:26-27), but we also discover some similarities of Moabite theology to that of Israelite theology (Pritchard 1958:106).

The King's Highway ran through Moab towards Edom, and therefore Moab also had a fair share of the profits of the trade along this busy highway. The other flourishing concern, and one that Ahab profited by, was that of sheepbreeding. In 2 Kings 3: 4 we read that 'Mesha king of Moab was a sheepbreeder and he used to supply the king of Israel regularly with the wool of a hundred thousand lambs...'. Such a tribute can only have been a very profitable one for Ahab. This is amply witnessed by the rebellion which broke out when Ahab died and his son, Jehoram, had to quell Moab's uprising, in order to retain this lucrative tribute.

2.2.3 The land of Edom.

Geographically Edom is the southern part of the Transjordan trio. One chief city was Sela, from which the King's Highway branched into two 'ways' out across the desert to Egypt. The northern one went the 'way of the wilderness of Shur', whilst the southern one, as a continuity of the King's Highway, went close by the other chief city, Teman, from which point it went through the Arabah until it reached the seaport of Elath (Aharoni 1979:56). From the port of Elath a road ran west to On in Egypt, whilst another went to Tema in Arabia.

Edom's dry and arid territorial position thus enclosed Palestine to the South and to the East, with '... lofty Mount Seir jutting like a finger towards the heart of the wilderness' (Aharoni & Avi-Yonah 1968:14). This mountain range enjoyed rainfall in winter, but only on the western edge, which made the land unsupportive to extensive crop planting and stockbreeding. Hence the Edomites looked for other means of support, one of which was as traders and merchants. Another means of support was through the exploitation of the copper mines, which were located on either side of the Arabah. Copper and iron was used in the manufacturing of weapons and tools, and as war was an everpresent reality and tools a necessary daily commodity, there was a continual demand for these items (Aharoni & Avi-Yonah 1968:19). Finally there was a less than pleasant means by which the Edomites practiced survival. And this means occured because there was no definite border between them and their settled neighbours, with the result that '... hungry desert nomads of the desert have beaten on the doors of the Holy Land since time immemorial' (Aharoni & Avi-Yonah 1968:14).

During the United Kingdom Saul inflected defeat on Edom, whilst David, with great violence and bloodshed entered this kingdom and made Edom subject to him (2 Sm 8:13). Solomon experienced less success with Edom , but had a fleet of ships at Elath, which sailed to Ophir, bringing back gold (1 Ki 9:26ff). The Edomites were thus in possession of not only a lucrative land route, but had the added benefit of a sea outlet, the harbour of Elath.

After the schism the Southern Kingdom of Judah retained her hold on Edom. The king of Judah, Jehosaphat (870-848 BCE), remained at peace with Edom. During the reign of Jehosaphat's son, Joram (848-841 BCE), Edom rebelled and defeated him (2 Ki 8:20-22). Edom's newfound

independence lasted only until the co-regencies of Amaziah (796-767 BCE), and Uzziah (792/1-740/39 BCE). But, Edom drove Judah from Elath (2 Ki 16:6), and control of Elath and its lucrative maritime trade was then firmly in their own hands (Lapp 1994:217).

This sketch of Edom's history contains several realities, namely: that the King's Highway, and its branches traversed their territory, that the Edomites were traders of renown, and that Ahab had good relations with Judah who, in turn, had connections to Elath (Israel and Judah were not always peaceful neighbours!) This state of affairs could only be to the benefit of Ahab and his kingdom. The importance of Elath, as the port through which the perfumes of South Arabia and other luxurious commodities made their way, is evident in 1 Kings 22:49, where we read about the wrecked ships of Jehosaphat. When Ahaziah (853/852 BCE) Ahab's son, proposed a joint venture to alleviate this disaster, Jehosaphat refused to cooperate; an indication of a jealously guarded enterprise.

2.2.4 The land of Philistia

As part of the 'Sea Peoples' migrations from the Aegean Islands and Asia Minor towards the end of the Bronze Age (c 1200 BCE), the Philistines came as 'strangers' to the southern coastal plain of the Mediterranean Seaboard. Their major clash (c 1170 BCE) with the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses III of Egypt, is depicted on the walls of his funerary temple at Medinet Habu. These Philistines are shown with a distinctive type of headgear which resembles a band of upright feathers, a 'feather helmet '(see illustration 1), and with lances and long swords in their hands. They have their families and their belongings with them, an indication that the '...Sea Peoples seem to appear as migrants and not as military invaders' (Mazar 1990:305). The Philistines ultimately settled in the land which was to bear their name, Palestine.

Their settlement occured in a narrow and limited strip in the southern part of the sandy coastline where they established their five main cities, namely, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron (Mazar 1990:308). These cities dominated the coastal plain and as a result had dominion over the main international route 'the way of the Sea' (Is 8:23). This road, also called the *Via Maris*, came all the way from On in Egypt and followed the Philistine coastline up to Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley. From there one branch continued up the coast, through Phoenicia to Ugarit. The

other branch also continued North, but went to Hazor and then across to Damascus in Aram. There a further branching led to Mari via Aleppo and Tadmore. The rest of this route traced the Euphrates River, past Babylon and Ur down to its final destination at the Lower Sea, the modern day Persian Gulf (Aharoni & Avi-Yonah 1968:16,17).

The arrival of the Philistines went hand in hand with their knowledge of working in iron, an accomplishment which gave them a monopoly of iron weapons and a thorough acquaintance with military techniques (Payne 1981:137). Their battles with the Israelites amply demonstrate this advantage since '... no blacksmith was to be found in the whole of Israel...' (1 Sm 13:19).

Realising that their survival and freedom from Philistine rule depended on a united front, the Israelites chose Saul as their first king (1Sm 11:12ff). His victories were inconclusive, but David quelled the enemy to such an extent that the Philistines were never a major power again. They did however, sporadically harass the kingdom of Israel. It was during the siege of the Philistine city, Gibbethon, that the commander of the Israelite forces, Baasha of Issachar (909/8-886/85 BCE), slew the king of Israel, Nadab (910/9-909/8 BCE), and so himself became king of Israel (1 Ki 15:25-28). Omri too, was fighting the Philistines at Gibbethon when the news came of Zimri's assassination of the son of Baasha, thus paving the way for Omri to be proclaimed and to become king of Israel (1Ki 15:15).

The primary aim of these campaigns at Gibbethon was to capture the Gibbethon 'bulge', a geographical feature which commanded the ascents to the mountains of Samaria, and to shut off the rear of Jaffa (Gichon 1978:103). Also, the nearby fortress capital of Tirzah was on the main strategic artery to the Jordan Valley and Gilead, a position which the new city, Samaria, was to inherit when she became the new capital of the Kingdom of Israel (Gichon 1978:103).

After their subjugation the sphere of influence of the Philistines was confined to their monopoly of the *Via Maris* as traders, and to their role as navigators along the eastern Mediterranean seaboard. This stretch of the *Via Maris* could, of course, also be used as a means of getting to and from another kingdom for the purpose of war, as opposed to trade alone. This was exactly what happened when Shishak I invaded Palestine in 924 BCE, and when the Philistines killed

Saul at the battle of Gilboa in the Jezreel Valley. The *Via Maris* was thus conducive to economic prosperity, but had to be watched for signs of threat. Subsequently the Omrids made sure of sufficient fortifications of their cities such as Megiddo, Samaria and Dor. These cities formed a barrier which hindered a crossing of Israel, either towards the Jordan Valley, or to the northern part of the kingdom.

2.2.5 The land of Phoenicia

As a people of Canaanite origin the Phoenicians occupied a very narrow strip of coastal land which had the Kingdom of Israel to its south, whilst its eastern boundary consisted of the mountains of Lebanon. Their main (coastal) cities were Sidon, Tyre, Byblos and Arvad. Because of the geographical environment of the land, the Phoenicians had no choice but to go west, and thus '...to seek an outlet by sea rather than by land...' (Harden 1971:23), despite the fact that parts of the land were arable for some crop planting and could sustain sheep and goats. The 'outlet', the Mediterranean Sea, therefore became the provider for a lucrative trade in a varied assortment of merchandise.

The Palestine coast possesses many small bays flanking headlands, which ensures the adequate defence of a city. This was a geographical feature which the Phoenicians exploited to the full, not only on their own home territory, but also in their choices of sites for colonization (Harden 1971:23-25). Examples of such colonization occured at Carthage and Uttica and at Gades in Spain. Their founding of a colony of settlers on Cyprus enabled them to use that island '... as a useful staging post for Phoenician vessels going further afield' (Harden 1971:53). These vessels sailed across the whole of the Mediterranean Sea, to touch at ports , whether along the coasts of the Levant, Egypt, Africa, Spain, Gallia (France), Italy, Greece or Asia Minor. This flourishing sea trade naturally had accommodated wares of a varied nature, such as slaves, gold, corn, cattle, metals, textiles, wild animals, ivory, precious stones, wood, and so forth. Added to these commodities were the raw materials which their own land and coastal waters provided.

Their magnificent forests of pines, cypresses and cedars, were renowned, and supplied them with the wood needed to foster '...their joinery and their skill at building in wood and stone, of

which... the Hebrew monarchy made such good use' (Harden 1971:127). We read in 1 Kings 10:11-22 of the wealth of Solomon, and how he used it to buy wood, brought in by the fleet of Hiram of Tyre. This alliance with Hiram, is epitomized by the cedar wood which he supplied to Solomon for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. In a likewise manner the Omrids too, made their alliances with Phoenicia, and utilized their materials and expertise in order to erect and to adorn their own buildings. Being thus in the dual business of trade as well as manufacturing enabled the Phoenicians to become experts and masters at various crafts such as ivory carving, the production of items of glass, jewellery designs and the use of building materials. Verily, such a neighbour could not be spurned, and consequently she was the marginal land which became the one to contribute the most to the accomplishment of Omri and Ahab at their royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel. Excavations at Samaria has unearthed the expert masonry (see illustrations 10a&10b), the embellishment of their buildings and the finely crafted works in ivory, for which the Phoenicians were famous (see illustration 6).

Their religion was based on the gods and goddesses of the Canaanite pantheon, with *El* as the supreme god, his consort *Asherat*-of-the-sea (*Astarte*) as the mother-goddess and their son, *Baal*, as the god of storms and rains (Harden 1971:74). The worshipping of a multitude of gods made this very close neighbour of the Kingdom of Israel a marginal heathen and pagan kingdom. Ahab's marriage to Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal of Sidon, brought this pagan worship, of *Baal*, to the city of Samaria (1Ki 16:31), where Ahab had an altar built for *Baal* in the 'house of *Baal*'. But, of course, this alliance also brought with it economic implications which could not be ignored. Hence the religious tolerance, as advocated by the Omrids, should be seen as one of the factors in a contextual reality of the prosperity generated by such an alliance with Phoenicia. The independant states of Phoenicia was to end with the Assyrian conquests of the eighth and the seventh centuries BCE.

2.2.6 The land of Aram-Damascus

In Genesis 22:21 Aram is described as being a descendent of Abraham's brother Nahor. This made them close kin to the Hebrews, a relationship which would fluctuate between wars and peace (Payne 1981:152). As a people though, the Arameans had settled in the area to the North

east of Palestine, whereas the Hebrews had settled in Palestine itself. Their geographical setting, between the coastal landstrip of Phoenicia and the kingdoms of the Mesopotamian area, made it possible for them to attain great prosperity by means of the trade which of necessity had to flow through their territory. The Aramean capital of Damascus was situated at the end of the major caravan routes. The King's Highway, the Via Maris and the roads from the Lower Sea via Ur, Mari and Tadmor all converged here, thus transforming Damascus into the most important city in the region (Aharoni & Avi-Yonah 1968:16,17). As an important center for trade, the city of Damascus became a prized target, which envious neighbours tried to seize and control. Damascus was thus a conveyors-belt for prosperous trade as well as for marching armies. Aram could open or close doors, and in that capacity could be either friend or foe.

The three kings of the United Kingdom, Saul, David and Solomon, managed a steady control on Aram. However, as no encounter with the Assyrians is recorded for this period of time, it allowed the Arameans to gradually coalesce themselves into kingdoms. Thus when the United Kingdom fell apart in (931/930 BCE, cf Thiele 1983:217), the situation changed and the Arameans found themselves independent. From then onwards Aram and the kingdom of Israel would walk a rocky road, one of changing sides and alliances.

Assyrian expansion had, in the meantime, been revived, and in 853 BCE, Shalmaneser III (833-859 BCE) marched his armies towards the west and the coastal cities of Phoenicia. He came as far as Qarqar, but was halted in 853 BCE by a coalition of kings of the west, who had now realized the potential danger of this king's invasions. (Aharoni & Avi-Yonah 1968:81). Shalmaneser's commemorative 'Monolith' Inscription, which records this battle as a 'victory', credits Ben-hadad of Damascus with 1200 chariots. These figures indicate the clout Aram could pack (Ahab was credited with 2000 chariots).

These figures are indicative of the facilities needed to accommodate such vast numbers of chariots and horses. Solomon had his 'cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen'(1 Ki 9:19). Ahab likewise, as a great and powerful king, had his 'cities'. The massive fortifications at Jezreel speak loudly of defence and protective measures. Therefore it is probable that the city harboured these precious, and expensive, commodities.

As a 'marginal kingdom' Aram, at her best, was thus a buffer against invading armies from the north, and an economic factor which meant trade and wealth. At her worst, Aram could change sides and renege on treaties and alliances, which affected the fortunes of the kingdoms surrounding her. This happened when Ben-hadad III reneged on a promise he had made after his defeat by Ahab at Aphek. He neglected to restore all the Israelite towns and held on to the northern fringe of Gilead and the city of Ramoth-gilead. Ahab could not allow this infringement on the security of his kingdom. Ramoth-gilead straddled the King's highway and was the gateway to the grainbearing and grazing areas west of the Hauran mountains, and as such represented strategic and economic advantages (Gichon 1978:120,121). Also, this city was less than 90 kilometers from Jezreel. Once at Jezreel, any army was but a step away from Megiddo and Samaria. The additional fortifications, and strengthening, of these three cities by Ahab, as well as those of Hazor in the north, amply evidences how expedient it was to ensure that sufficient defensive measures were in place.

Aram's religious practices would have been similar to that of Phoenicia and the kingdoms around her, that is, she would have worshipped a pantheon of gods, and not one single god as the Israelites did. The Zakir Inscription, a stela set up by Zakir, the king of Hamath after his confrontation with Ben-hadad of Aram, mentions a god, namely 'Be'elshamayn', who most likely was his patron god. Be'elshamayn was the same god as the 'Baal' of the Phoenicians and the 'Hadad' of the Arameans. (Miller & Hayes 1986:263,294,303). Ahab's temple to Baal in Samaria reflects these 'realities of influences' which could not be avoided, because of the inter-relationships amongst marginal kingdoms.

The next marginal lands to be discussed are those of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Since both these two kingdoms stemmed from one root, the United Monarchy under David and Solomon, a short glimpse of these two monarchs will be given.

David's military conquests included most of the marginal kingdoms, that is, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Philistia and Aram. His diplomatic treaty with Hiram of Tyre (2 Sm 5:11f) was the early beginning of the use of Phoenician materials and craftsmen, a precedent which Solomon and later kings would utilize to the full. David's personal accomplishment was the capture of the

Jebusite city of Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:6-10) which then became the capital of the United Kingdom.

Solomon's reign was an aggrandized version of David's economical, political and religious policies. He is also the king who built the Temple to Yahweh in Jerusalem (1 Ki 6). During his reign his kingdom experienced peace, good trade and diplomatic relations with its neighbours, and the wealth that went with those enterprises. Such great wealth enabled him to embark on extensive building projects. His methods, of forced labour in order to accomplish his objectives, did not go down well with his subjects (1 Ki 9:15-19). Their dissatisfaction became apparent at Solomon's death, and a 'schism' occured due to the inability of Solomon's son, Rehoboam (931/930-913 BCE), to 'lighten their heavy yoke' (1 Ki 12:1-11). The schism resulted in the birth of the two Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, each with its own monarch.

2.2.7 The land of Judah

The new kingdom of Judah was much smaller, less fertile and economically weaker than her counterpart, the kingdom of Israel. The Judean hill country was dry and arid, but not completely barren, since the well-watered and terraced western slopes could cater for the planting of grapes, grain and olives. Further south lay the Negeb Desert, an area which had a measure of sheep-raising. Still further south , in the Arabah, were the copper mines which were in the hands of the Edomites. The Mediterranean coast plain, with its fields of grain, was to the west of Judah, but this stretch of coast was in the hands of the Philistines. To the north lay the fertile valleys of the newly established kingdom of Israel. Across from Judah , on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, lay the lands of Moab and Edom. Various 'ways' linked Judah to the major route, the Via Maris, the way of the Philistines, and to the second international route, the King's Highway, which ran from Elath to Damascus (Aharoni & Avi-Jonah 1968:16,17).

Above details project the diminished status Judah had now acquired, a far cry from the totality and greatness of the previous United Kingdom . However she did have one powerful advantage which Israel could never have. Jerusalem was not only Judah's capital city, she was also the strongest city in the whole of the two kingdoms, and was the place where the Temple stood. The Temple embodied the center of worship for all Israelites, with its functioning and authoritive priesthood and its personification of the 'Davidic line', the vessel through which the kings of

Judah would be the legitimate inheritors of the promise Yahweh had given that, 'Your family shall be established and your kingdom shall stand for all time in my sight, and your throne shall be established forever' (2 Sm 7:16). This was not only a tremendous inheritance for Judah's kings, but was also a great challenge for the kings of Israel, who did not have such credentials. Thus Omri purchased and established Samaria, and made it an imposing counterpart to Jerusalem and, as an added asset and implementation of legitimacy, took Jezreel and turned it into a second, royal show of power and authority.

The emergence of two weaker kingdoms brought forth opportunities for gain and, 'In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem' (1 Ki 14:25). Laying waste to much of the two kingdoms, whilst collecting the Temple treasures enroute), Shishak returned home to quell internal rebellion, never to return to consolidate his victories (Mazar, B 1992:395,396). This military campaign set a precedent for conquest of the smaller and weaker kingdoms, a feat which had been unattainable when they were united. Solomon with his unified realm, well-defended cities such as Gezer, Hazor, Megiddo and Jerusalem (1 Ki 9:15) had been too strong to conquer, but each separate kingdom, was easy prey. The fortifications of Rehoboam may have been in anticipation of such attacks ' ... and he built cities in Judah' (2 Chr 11:5).

Another, equally dangerous precedent was set. When Rehoboam's grandson, Asa, was at war with Baasha, king of Israel, he requested help from Ben-hadad 1, king of Aram. Ben-hadad acceeded to Asas' request and sent his armies to Israel. By means of this method, which was both an attractive but also an extremely fatal solution to the problem, Judah facilitated the introduction of treacherous behaviour. Ben-hadad was an ally of Israel at this time, and his easy swing from one ally to another portended future acts of treason and confrontations. Each 'marginal' kingdom could, from now onwards, use any opportunity to play off Judah and Israel against each other, with the two kingdoms as the prize for their effort.

Asa's son, Jehosaphat, who was a contemporary of Ahab, allied himself with Ahab against the Arameans, and was present at Ramoth-gilead where Ahab died in battle (1 Ki 22:1-37). Jehosaphat built forts and store cities (2 Chr 17:12), and tried to restore maritime trade at Elath (1 Ki 22:47). By way of these activities Jehosaphat sought to strengthen and to retain the

kingdom of Judah. His long and peaceful reign was a tribute to his good relations with Israel, which promoted the security needed for both Jehosaphat and Ahab to accrue the benefits from their sound economic and administrative policies.

Joram (853-841 BCE) experienced revolt from Edom, which he attempted to subdue, but was defeated in the process. Joram deviated from the religious practices of his father, Jehosaphat, because of his marriage to Ahab's daughter (2 Ki 8:18). His son, Ahaziah (d 841 BCE), allied himself with Joram, Ahab's son, against Hazael of Aram, at Ramoth-gilead (2 Ki 8:26ff). His death, at the hands of Jehu (841-814/13 BCE), occured when he visited the wounded Joram of Israel at Jezreel (2 Ki 21:24).

As a marginal land Judah related to Israel by means of the quality of her kings. Asa saw fit to ally himself with an enemy of Israel, whilst Jehosaphat stayed on the side of Israel, and with his subjugation of Edom kept its trade routes and the copper mines open for trade. These very lucrative trade routes ensured the continuing supply of luxury goods to both Judah and Israel. The Omrids had the necessary royal aspirations, and the wealth, to embellish their residences at Samaria and Jezreel. Joram's loss of Edom, therefore, spelled the opposite, since besides the loss of trade, there was now the distinct possibility of the dangerous presence of an enemy right next door. The contact and interrelationships between Judah and her sister kingdom of Israel was consequently the most complicated one of all the marginal lands.

2.2.8 The land of Israel

Geographically much larger than Judah, Israel had, to the north of Jezreel the highlands of Galilee, whilst to the south of Jezreel lay the Ephraimite hill country. This feature stretches up to Jerusalem from whence it runs, as the Judean hills, into the Negeb (Miller & Hayes 1986:43). The Jezreel Valley is a flat and fertile area, which makes it conducive to easy travelling, from inland to the Mediterranean coast, as well as giving an agricultural yield of various crops. The main cities were Megiddo, Taanach and Beth-shean. The Ephraimaite hill country had fertile farmlands, with its valleys providing access to the central part of the region. The main cities here were Dothan, Tirzah and, later, Omri's Samaria (Miller & Hayes 1986:44). Allthough there were no major routes, like the *Via Maris* and the King's Highway running through Israel, there were

many crossroads, from east to west, and a north- south road from Shechem *via* Jerusalem to Hebron (Aharoni & Avi-Jonah 1968:17). However, any subjugation of the Trans-jordanian kingdoms put Israel in control, or at least made her able, to utilize the King's Highway, the international road with its connections to Arabia and to the seaport at Elath (Miller & Hayes 1986:234). Geographically too was Israel's access to the Mediterranean Sea, which allowed her the benefit of maritime trade and close proximity to Phoenicia, a marginal land of great wealth. Close enough to Israel was Aram and its prosperous city of Damascus, a rich source of inland trade from the East.

As was the case with Judah and her kings, in like manner Israel's'quality of kings' played a decisive role in her relationships with her neighbours. Jeroboam 1 (931/30-910/9BCE) the first king of Israel, is best remembered for his cultic apostasy, but, like his successors (including Ahab), he had to accommodate the religious diversity of his realm. The loss of Jerusalem's 'Royal Zion theology', and its priestly cast, had of necessity to be replaced by new religious authority (Miller & Hayes 1986:242). This Jeroboam did by renovation of the sanctuaries at Dan in the north and Bethel in the south (1Ki 12:28-33). This deviation was seen as rank apostasy by the later editors of the books of 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles. Similarly Ahab's 'temple' and altar to *Baal'*, which he had erected in Samaria (1 Ki 16:32), was condemned. But it is likely that a measure of Ahabs' success was exactly this accommodation to the religious needs of the diverse population of his kingdom.

The instability of Israel's throne, between the years of the schism and Israel's conquest by Sargon II in 720 BCE, is reflected in the rapid succession of its kings, and of whom only Omri and Jehu managed to create dynasties. A short summary shows that:
1) Jeroboam, the first king, was elected, but was not of the House of David.
2) Nadab, his son, was killed by Baasha (1 Ki 15:28).
3) Baasha, a military commander, was an usurper (1 Ki 15:32).
4) Elah, his son, was "drunk" when Zimri, a chariot commander killed him (1 Ki 16:10).
5) Zimri hearing that Omri was on his way to Tirzah, committed suicide (1 Ki 16:16-18).

This unstable situation called for a strong king to reverse the situation and to raise Israel to a

status comparable, or even better, than those of the marginal kingdoms. With the ascension of Omri (1 Ki 16:23), a new era was to dawn for the kingdom of Israel. Omri would establish a dynasty, one which would become so famous, that their 'house' became synonomous with greatness, the first individuals in Israelite and Judean history to have that honour mentioned in extra-biblical sources (refer to chapter three,3.2). Ahab's defeat of the Arameans, his control of the Transjordan, and close alliance with Jehosaphat of Judah, allowed a time of prosperity which probably surpassed that of the earlier days of David and Solomon (Miller & Hayes 1986:250).

Echoes of that prosperity was found through the use of the archaeological spade. In Chapters Six and Seven of this dissertation, a closer look shall be taken at the archaeological results of excavations done at the cities of Samaria and Jezreel, the two royal seats of the Omrids in the kingdom of Israel. These results will show that Omri, and especially Ahab, were very effective kings indeed.

But there were dark clouds on the horizon. The Assyrians were on a determined course of conquest. Ahab and the anti-Assyrian coalition would deter a take-over, but that was only a temporary respite. The Assyrians would receive tribute from Omri's successor Jehu, a dishonour the Omrid dynasty never experienced. Omri and his successor Jehu managed the only real dynasties, spanning the period from 885/84-841 to 753 BCE. Afterwards a total of six kings reigned for the remaining period of only 33 years, until Israel's conquest by Assyria in 720 BCE.

2.2.9 The land of Assyria

The geographical position of Assyria in the north-eastern corner of the Fertile Crescent, prevented her from being a close 'marginal' neighbour of Palestine. She was, however, surrounded by her own 'marginal' kingdoms. To the south lay Babylon (future conqueror of Assyria), and in the north was Urartu. The kingdom of Aram was in the north-western corner of the Crescent, whilst to the far east lay Media and Elam. To the south Assyria had the arid Arabian Desert as a border. Consequently Assyria could use only the 'arched arm' as a vehicle for expansion to the west. Her main cities were Ashur and Nineveh, the seats of the authority of her kings.

This was Assyria's position at the beginning of the ninth century BCE. Her historical existence though, had started long before this point in time when the first Semitic dynasty of Sargon I of Agade (circa 2370 BCE), and his successors, had forced the whole of the Fertile Crescent into submission. This period of bondage, according to Olmstead (1923:23), was the time when the 'Assyrian character' was being formed. Because of her central position (as in the case of Israel) amongst these fluctuating kingdoms, she was open to attacks on all sides, and resource to warfare became a solution to the problem. 'Through this necessity of being allways on the alert, the natural warlikeness of the Semite was not lost, as so generally happened when the nomad became sedentary; rather it heightened to an extreme which sometimes became unjustified delight in human suffering' (Olmstead 1923:24). This assessment, on the Assyrians' 'world view', justifies to a great degree the fiercesome reputation they attained throughout their military campaigns (see illustration 8a). Interspersed with these periods of harsh conquests though, were also periods of quieter relationships, as well as of diminished power and vassalage to other conquerors.

The first major king, Shamsi-adad I (1813-1781 BCE), set in place the war machine which rolled on intermittently until Ashur-uballit I (1365-1330 BCE) founded the Assyrian Empire, which Shalmaneser I (1274-1245 BCE) expanded. Within this expansion was also a new system which Shalmaneser implemented, namely, his 'transportation system of conquered peoples' (see illustration 8b) to areas away from their homelands (Saggs 1984:23-48). With the assassination of Shamsi-adad's son, Tukulti-Ninurta I (1245-1208 BCE), came a 'silence of decline', which suddenly burst into a noisy revival with the ascension of Tiglath-Pileser I in the period of 1115-1077 BCE (Saggs 1984:55-58). This king raised his realm to new heights, but the ever-increasing Aramean threat, and his death, ushered in a decline which was later revived by Ashur-nasir-pal II (883-859 BCE) and his son, Shalmaneser III (859-824 BCE).

This father and son both pursued a policy of expansion, and in the process sought domination of the trade route to the Mediterranean Seaboard. On the bronze gates of a temple at Balawat Shalmaneser has portrayed Tyre's tribute, as well as his chariots on their way to conquest (see illustration 7a), as a testimony of a successful campaign. It was however also a testimony to a dangerous threat which could come Israel's way. The annexation of Phoenicia would be a

disasterous reality, since it meant the loss of reciprocal trade, a fearsome enemy within conquering distance, and the haunting spectre of transportation.

In his excavations at Hazor, in the north of Israel, Yadin (1975) discovered the filled in casemate walls which served as Ahab's fortifications of the city. The strengthening of these double walls (see illustration 12a), to that of a single strong wall, was probably due to an ever increasing concern about Assyrian expansion and warfare methods. According to Yadin (1975:168-170) it was the use of a more powerful type of battering ram by the Assyrians which necessitated Ahab in applying this change in fortifications, since defence and attack stand in direct relation to each other. This time, however, the war effort of the Assyrian kings' attempt at conquest was deferred when Ahab and his anti-Assyrian coalition staved Shalmaneser at Qarqar in 853 BCE

So, despite Assyria's 'farflung marginality' the actual reality was that she was never far away enough to be harmless. Her periods of warfare made her an expert at war and its machinations. Her siege machines, well- trained soldiers, deportment policies and reputation for cruelty, was a dreaded reality for the peoples of that time. Israel's respite, under the auspices of such capable kings like Ahab, was only temporary, and she fell to this relentless enemy in 722 BCE.

2.2.10 The land of Egypt

Egypt and its lifegiving river, the Nile, lay in the south-western end of the Fertile Crescent. But unlike its counterpart Assyria, in the north-eastern part of this Crescent, Egypt was far more isolated and geographically confined. This resulted in a uniform and conservative civilization which lasted, with little change, for hundreds of years , with only the ' ... various dynasties succeeding each other over the years, from the time of the Early Kingdom down through the Middle and into the late Kingdoms' (Aharoni & Avi-Jonah 1968:12). Such a confinement isolated Egypt to a great extent from the invasions which the surrounding kingdoms were subjected to. Thus when she fell apart, it was as a result of internal weaknesses rather than threats from outside.

The Old (Early) Kingdom (dynasties III-VI circa 2650-2200 BCE) underwent such a period of chaos when Pepi II (circa 2180 BCE) died, and a decline of central authority ensued. However,

an inscription from the tomb of Uni, a commander of the army of Pepi I (circa 2350 BCE), relates the conquest of the plain of Acco and a part of the Jezreel Valley. Egypt might be isolated, but that did not refrain her from going beyond her own borders as far, and even further than the boundaries of Palestine (Aharoni & Avi-Jonah 1968:25). The Middle Kingdom (circa 2050-1800 BCE), managed to bring order and a period of prosperity ensued.

The event which brought this kingdom to an end was the invasion, and takeover, by a band of Asiatics known as the Hyksos (1720-1570 BCE). Their introduction of the 'horse and chariot' (a new and fearsome weapon of war), gave them the necessary upperhand with which to subdue their enemies. Their building methods, of a massive embankment and glacis which rose from a moat, finds echo in the excavations done at Jezreel, which show similar defensive measures, and which seemed to have been a method of fortification which was probably used in *protecting large areas for horses and chariots* (Aharoni & Avi-Jonah 1968:30). This observation will find itself used in my later discussion on the excavations at Jezreel. The Hyksos were expelled from Egypt by Ahmose I. Once the dynasties XVIII - XX of the New Kingdom (1570-1090 BCE) had established their own power-base, the 'new kings' marched their armies to Palestine and South Syria, and Thutmose III (1468 BCE) and his successors took firm control of Palestine

The invasion of the 'Sea Peoples' forced the Pharaoh Merneptah into a defensive operation His boast, that he had won this battle, 1220 BCE), can be read on a monument he set up in Thebes. Called the 'Israel Stele'(see illustration 5), the inscription on it reads that '... Ashkelon is taken, Gezer captured ... Israel lies desolate...' This inscription is the earliest mention, outside the Bible, of Israel. However, a gradual decline had set in, and by the time of Solomon we read in 1Kings 3:1, that he had married Pharaoh's daughter and in 1 Kings 10:28 that he had imported horses and chariots from Egypt. After the death of Solomon, Egypt tried again to dominate the two kingdoms when Shishak invaded the land. That was a last foray into Palestine, and the Omrids had no trouble from this once mighty kingdom.

But, even though the empire was gone, the influence Egypt had on the people of Israel and Judah whether socially, economically or religiously, was of great impact, because though Egypt was isolated, the northern part of her land had the Mediterranean Sea as a coastline and border. She

therefore had her own maritime trade and relations with other sea traders such as the Phoenicians. And so from Egypt came not only all sorts of merchandise, slaves, perfumes and the gold of Ophir, but also the various motifs, which found expression in the arts and crafts used for buildings, for carved ivories and for other objects of beauty. Some of the motifs used were palm fronds, lotus flowers and sphinxes. These motifs are found reflected in the ivories which were discovered in the 'ivory house' at Samaria (see illustration 6).

In my discussion on the lands and peoples who played a role in the 'interkingdom relations'during the United and Divided Monarchies, I tried to indicate that each kingdom was a part of the whole of all the kingdoms of the Fertile crescent. The Omrids of Israel therefore could not isolate themselves. Whether for religious, political or social considerations, they very much had to accomodate themselves to the conglomerate of kingdoms which surrounded them. A tricky task, but, at the same time they also opened up the way for economic prosperity and peaceful co-existence, and thus the opportunity to realize their ambitions.

The sheer task involved in the establishment of the new city, Samaria, and the subsequent labour and materials needed in the achievement of such an enterprise, could only come about with a determination to accomplish this task, and with the help, expertise and materials from neighbouring kingdoms. The magnitude of the defence system at Jezreel illustrates the other side of the coin, since neighbouring kingdoms could declare war, and preparedness was thus the order of the day. Jezreel was thus a different reality to that of Samaria, one which could look beyond the grandeur needed for a capital city, and achieve in its own right the task of readiness for the contextual realities of the ninth century BCE.

In the past two chapters I made use of sources to amplify some of the statements I made. However there is far more to sources than just 'bracketed names' or 'quotations'. Subsequently I shall, in the next chapter, concentrate on sources; their origins, their contents and context, and their application as a means to find and present a coherent picture of the Omrids in their context of ninth century BCE Israel.

CHAPTER THREE

3 SOURCES. THE BASIS TOWARDS RESEARCH

The Oxford dictionary defines *SOURCES* as 'fountainhead', 'origin' and 'prime cause'. It follows then that a source is the material which is used to obtain information in order to attain an answer to a posed question. But is it as easy as that? No! Because inherent in a source is a contextual setting and its author, both of which have influenced the transmission of the testimony. Also, it is a fact that most sources, be they written, inscripted or of structural matter, reflect the actions and accomplishments of a king and his barons rather than the doings of his citizens or the toil of his peasants in the fields. Events such as wars and conquests are inscribed on the walls of buildings and temples not just to impress his contemporaries, but to serve as a lasting monument, of ' kingly excellence', for future generations to see and read.

These types of ' primary' sources are thus prone to bias and partiality, but are also actual representations *of aspects of an event*, which occured in a *time and place context*. A good example of such a source is the Monolith Inscription which contains Shalmaneser III of Assyria's boastful report of his (nebulous) victory at Qarqar. A source is therefore the end result of many influential factors, and as such affect our interpretation of them.

I selected the following authors, namely, J A Soggin, A Mazar, W G Dever and N K Gottwald as representive of some of the viewpoints, and approaches, on how to tackle this problem, because these approaches can act as agents towards an evaluation of the structures and artifacts which were found at both Samaria and Jezreel.

Soggin (1984:20), in his 'A History of Israel', likens the research of the historian to that of the functions of a court of law, where the court '...cross-examines the witnesses, examines the evidence, and evaluates the circumstances ... arrives at a verdict ... considered to be based on an authentic and normative reconstruction of events'. This sounds fairly straightforward but, as Soggin warns, the evidence could have become ' contaminated' because '... those who originally handed down the traditions were influenced by different interests from the ones that motivated their successors' (1984:20). The result is that pieces of evidence, deemed 'valuable', took

precedence over those deemed to be 'not-so-valuable', and *vice versa*. In other words, that which had seemed to the original author to be unimportant, is summarily pushed to one side, to the detriment of the outcome of the evidence in question. For example: the perception of ordinary readers, of 1 Kings 16 to 11 Kings 9, is based on the information they glean from those specific chapters. Now, unless these ordinary readers know of other sources pertaining to the Omrid period (which is highly unlikely), they are not going to credit these kings with any good characteristics. The redactional tampering with the evidence has allowed a certain verdict to emerge which , in turn, has obscured the presence and deeds of the 'original' Omrids.

When we turn to an archaeologist such as Amihai Mazar, and his experiences with practical means (excavations) and visible finds (artifacts), we encounter through him sources which comprise the raw material for reconstruction of the past, whether of a cultural or historical nature. Granted, a certain measure of guesswork will ensue in the interpretation of such excavated sources. However Mazar, and his contemporaries, can diminish most of these uncertainties by the application of an interdisciplinary approach. Consequently the study and intergration of their sources is like building a huge jigsaw puzzle, using all the expertise attained through anthropologists, phycicists, geologists, paleographers, metallurgists, computer programmers, and so forth, in order to achieve a comprehensive picture (Mazar 1990:27). To this list can be added the 'new' experts in fields such as economics, political science, city planning and management.

Each of these various disciplines have the necessary in depth study of its own subject matter and can generate viewpoints other than those based purely on an archaeological or literary background. Thus each discipline becomes a source, which *in combination* with written and archaeological data, enhances the interpretation and understanding of structural remains and artifacts. An understanding, of all the factors which contributed to a peoples cultural, social, religious, economic and political existence, is obligatory, since it then becomes easier to project how these people lived and how their kings ruled. Subsequently we can understand why the geographical fact of Samaria or Jezreel (or any other city), in conjunction with political or economical alliances, turned these cities into the role players they became.

Unlike other monarchies, who have come to our notice *via* a variety of sources such as inscriptions, tablets, stelae, and so forth, Israel's history has come to us via the Hebrew Bible. This theological work too has its roots in sources, since Israel's whole religious and socio-political experiences were based on laws, rituals and covenantal commitments, as set down by her priests and by the later presence of the Temple in Jerusalem. These theological sources are a constant reminder, to the reader of the Hebrew Bible, that he is dealing with the faith of a people and of the subsequent rewards, or punishments, for either a continuance or absence in observation of that faith. In order to temper the oft emotional and subjective involvement which arises from a theological approach to certain sources, another type of viewpoint is necessary, that is, of the scholar who can separate the sacred from the secular.

Dever, an eminent archaeologist known for his abrogation of the term 'Biblical Archaeology', was asked by Hershel Shanks why such an anti-biblical stance. His answer, printed in the 'Biblical Archaelogical Review' of July / August of 1996 (4), was as follows: 'I wanted to separate archaeology from Biblical studies for the purpose of dialogue .... What I want is an honest dialogue between two disciplines. As long as Palestinian, or Syro-Palestinian archaeology, or the archaeology of Israel, is construed as a sub-branch of Biblical studies, there will be a monologue, not a dialogue ... it's simply about defining our fields of inquiry' (1996:32). His concern was therefore that all archaeologists should be able to recognize relevant biblical issues and his hope was that biblical scholars will know enough about archaeology to be able to use it critically (Dever 1996:33). Only then can mutual dialogue enable sources to be assessed, interpreted and applied, to effect an unbiased and realistic image of an event, or of the deeds of a person(s).

Dever thus highlights that which he deems as an 'intrusion' into the Archaeology of Israel, namely, 'theological issues that never belonged there' (Dever 1996 :34). The impact, of the 'theological' issue in the history of the Omrid dynasty, is especially obvious when we try to separate the Biblical Omrids from the extra-biblical ones! Dever was not denying the Bible's religious significance, but was rather emphasising on the everchanging face of religion throughout the ages, since '...religious phenomena have a history.' (Gottwald 1985:11) and has thus influenced the thoughts of mankind.

This quote, by Gottwald, brings us to the last but certainly not the least, of the various approaches towards the study of Biblical and extra-Biblical sources, namely, the 'social-science', or socio-anthropological method, which Gottwald uses in his book 'The Hebrew Bible : a socio-literary Introduction'(1985) In this comprehensive work he concentrates on the origins of the Hebrew Bible, not only through a study of the biblical books and their respective texts, but also through a study of the conceptual world and social placement of those texts. Each book of the Old Testament is seen as having been born within a specific time and context, and of having changed or adapted according to new times and new contexts. In the process much of which was before, is not there anymore, and *vice versa*. And thus we find the presentation of the Omrids, as evil kings, based on conditions which had prevailed during the exile (586-539 BCE), more than 300 years after the demise of these kings.

The achievements of these rulers can thus only be appreciated if there is an awareness that all social units contain elements such as laws, rituals, and religious tenets, and that they act within a time and place context. This concentration on the socio-anthropological aspects of Israelite life, is therefore used so that '...cautious analogies are proposed between ancient Israelite society and ... other societies ... (*which*) exhibit similar features ...' (Gottwald 1985:28). Such an approach guards against superficial parallels by allowing for different developmental contexts.

Now, these methodologies sound very divergent, but inherent in the absence of uniformity there lie the seeds not only of comparisons and assimilations, rejections and acceptances, but the possibility of a reassessment of existing interpretations. These assessments can either reverse and denounce, or clarify and amplify previous renderings of sources. Ideally therefore each new archaeological excavations, and its artifacts, should be subjected to such divergent methods as described above. Such an exercise will aid us in our interpretation of archaeological artifacts, which, hopefully, can be induced to persuade us of the accomplishments of their builders or, as in our case , the achievements of the Omrids at Samaria and Jezreel.

Since sources derive from different 'fountainheads', it is necessary to classify them according to type. The three types, or categories, are as follows:
Biblical sources - which correlate relationships between religion, redactors and sovereigns,

Extra- Biblical sources - which correlate relationships other than those of a biblical nature, Archaeological sources - which correlate tangible remnants into a semblance of the past.

3.1 Biblical sources

A study of the Hebrew Bible is first and foremost a study of the text. Each text '... expresses a a point of view and reflects a social setting. By focussing now on the text itself ... its conceptual world ... its social placement, different methods in biblical studies (can) contribute valuable understanding to the interpretation of the text as a whole' (Gottwald 1985:596). Such understanding offers the exegete insight into the kinds of narrative literature in the Bible, its author's intentions and their 'time situation' in which they wrote and composed their work. This insight is very neccessary, since the Old Testament is not just a literary narrative, but is a theological creation, which grew out of the accounts of God's laws to and interactions with Israel as the chosen people. It contains the accounts of the kings who ruled the United and subsequent Divided Kingdoms, and the degree of their adherence to the Laws of God. Consequently each 'historical' event, or reference to a people outside of Israel, was placed within the scope of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel. The authors therefore, who wrote the books of the Old Testament, composed them as the expression of their faith rather than as chronicles of events which were based on scientifically researched facts and exact chronological data.

We find our information, on the kings of Israel and Judah, in the biblical books of 1 & 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. This information is given within a fixed framework for each king's length of reign, his 'acts' and his death. The rest of his deeds were to be found in the 'Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel' (or Judah). These 'Chronicles' were probably annal-like books, and were used to chronicle dates, events, names of kings and their officials, and performances of public duties, and would therefore highlight the non theological issues pertaining to the kings (Haran 1999:156-164).

'Annals were a well-established means , in the Ancient Near East, by which to establish

regnal and calender years, and to report on the actions and achievements of rulers. The following examples demonstrate: '... and all his might ...' (Asa in 1 Ki 15:23), '... he bought the hill ... and built a city on the hill ...'(Omri in 1 Ki 16:24), ' ...the ivory house which he made... the cities that he built ...' (Ahab in 1 Ki 22:39). Unfortunately we have to find recourse to other sources in order to find out more of the kings deeds, since these chronicles of the two kingdoms have never been found (Haran 1999:156-164).

However, the redactors could not neglect to mention Samaria and Jezreel, since these cities were the residential and administrative centers from where the Omrids ruled their realm. Samaria and Jezreel therefore manifest themselves as Biblical sources in several instances. Even though they are not very extensive, we can get glimpses of the functions and the importance of these cities of the Omrids. Below is a synopsis of the textual mentioning of Samaria.

3.1.1 Samaria in the text

Biblical Source	Event / Person	Significance for Archaeology
1 Kings 16:24	Omri buys the hill of Shemer, and builds a new city on this hill.	Possible as a starting point for stratification.
1 Kings 16:29; 22:51 2 Kings 1:2; 3:1; 10:36; 2 Kings 13:1,10; 14:23; 15:8; 2 Kings 15:13,14; 17:1, 23,27	Royal city and residence for the Omrids and subsequent kings of Israel.	As the seat of royal authority and administration, this fact becomes conducive towards assessment of the archaeological structures found on site.
1 Kings 16:32; 22:39 2 Kings 13:6	Temple, altar to *Baal*. Cities that were built. Ivory house. Grove remained in Samaria.	Indications of religious practices. Strengthening of walls, gates, water systems, administrative buildings, palaces, materials used.
1 Kings 20:1; 2 Kings 6:24 2 Kings 17:5,5,24; 18:9-11	Sieges by Ben Hadad. Sargon (720 BCE) besieges Samaria. Its people are taken away, and replaced by foreigners.	Signs of destruction? Assyrian influences in subsequent building projects. People from elsewhere, their influences.
2 Chronicles 18:2,3	Jehosaphat goes to Samaria and allies himself with Ahab against the Arameans. Death of Ahab.	

1 Kings 18:2; 2 Kings 6:25	Famines	
1 Kings 16:28; 22:37 2 Kings 1:17; 10:35; 13:9,13; 14:16; 15:14,25.	Burial place of Omrids and all subsequent kings of the Kingdom of Israel	
2 Kings 10:17	Jehu (841 BCE) slays all of the house of Ahab.	

Jezreel was the second royal city of the Omrids, as well as being their most well fortified city. Thus this city seems to have been used not only as a residence, but as a haven of refuge to the Omrids. Below is a synopsis of the textual mentioning of Jezreel.

3.1.2 Jezreel in the text

Biblical Source	Event / Person	Significance for Archaeology
Joshua 19:17-23	Tribal inheritance of Issachar. Existence of an established settlement (tenth century?)	Conducive to an interpretation of structural remains to the Omrids, on the basis of their tribal connections, and the city thus being their second residence.
1 Kings 4:12	List of Solomon's 'officers'. Jezreel existence in the time of the United Kingdom.	If that the case, then the town must have been one of importance. Structural remains, defences?
1 Samuel 29:31; 2 Samuel 2:9 2 Samuel 4:4	Saul and David's battles against Philistines.	Siting of battles an indication of importance of this area. Defenses?
1 Kings 21:23 2 Kings 8:29; 9:15,16 2 Kings 9-10 2 Kings 9:17, 31, 36, 37	Prophecy, Jezebel's death Joram's refuge Jehu's coup, Joram's death, Jezebel's death. Jehu's presence at Jezreel. Purging of *Baal* cult.	By *walls* of Jezreel *Tower, gate, royal residence*, portion of Jezreel. Temple to *Baal*?
1 Kings 21:	Naboth's vineyard, close to the *palace* of Ahab.	Palace. Materials used for construction and decoration?

Above tabulation is based on H G M Williamson (1991:72-83), 'Jezreel in the Biblical texts'. These two summaries, of Samaria and Jezreel within the text, reflect them as Biblical literary

sources, albeit in a restricted sense. But, as can be observed, they become significant when one looks beyond theological connotations, and seeks to apply their *inherent information* to that of archaeological considerations. And that is when dialogues, instead of monologues, ensue.

We shall now go to a type of source which can further enhance our perception of the period of the Omrids, since they are sources which were not influenced by the authors of the Bible, and reflect a different perspective, as well as information not supplied by Scriptures.

3.2 Extra- Biblical sources

It was the year 1799 and the French, having been defeated by the British Admiral Nelson, were sailing home from Egypt to France. On his warship Napoleon Bonaparte had not only the remnants of his army, but also a large collection of Egyptian carvings and inscriptional writings. Amongst these there was a stone slab, found near Rosetta on the river Nile. This 'Rosetta Stone' (see illustration 2a) had lines of different writings inscribed on its surface; the top part was in hieroglyphs, the middle had Egyptian demotic script and the bottom part was in Greek. The man who deciphered these inscriptions was Jean- Francois Champollion (1790-1832).

His achievement would pave the way for hieroglyphic scholarship, which not only led us to, but also opened up the ' ... riches of Egyptian thought and culture, a vital part of the environment of the Hebrews (Jones 1974:7,8), and set a mode of decipherment into action which would find itself the medium of interpretations of future finds of inscriptional sources. Therefore, when the Ras Shamra Texts were found on a mound on the Mediterranean coast in 1928, they became a means by which to explore worlds, previously hidden and obscure to us because of preconceived ideas, a lack of knowledge and an inability to read 'strange' writings.

The Ras Shamra Texts, thought at first to be Akkadian cuneiform, was found to be an unknown alphabetic writing. Subsequently mound Ras Shamra was identified as ancient Ugarit (Claude Schaeffer 1928) and the strange script was deemed to be Ugaritic. Consisting of correspondence from the royal archives , as well as texts devoted to religious subjects, the Ras Shamra discovery enabled us to ' ... re-create the world of Canaanite thought and practice, which

hitherto, we could only infer from the passages in which such abominations were attacked by the Hebrew prophets' (Jones:1974:44; cf Craigie 1983:71-73). Our understanding, of the practices and influences which the Israelites must have been subjected to, is enhanced by these religious revelances, and we can assess anew the prophets' condemnations, the reality of the religious world of the kingdom of Israel, and the altar to *Baal* which was erected by Ahab in Samaria.

Above-mentioned examples serve as an introduction to the term ' Extra- Biblical', since their contents do not appear in the Hebrew Bible, and are therefore in no way related to the traditions of the biblical text. So, when we read of the Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Hurrians and so forth in the Bible, our extra-Biblical sources provide us with the contextual reality of their relationship with the Israelites, and thus provide insight on certain aspects of specific times, places and events.

However, our use of extra-Biblical sources depend on two important factors before we can conclude that our interpretations are accurate enough for an understanding of the context from which they originated. These two factors are:

The condition of the source. Is it badly fragmented, are many ' readable' areas missing? Can a comprehensive study be made from such material? The recently found (1993 / 1994) Tel Dan Aramaic Stele Inscription (see illustration 13), highlights this problem. The three pieces of fragments contain enough data to date its setting to mid-ninth century BCE (based on archaeological and palaeo- graphic grounds), and its purpose as that of a 'victory' stele, erected by an Aramean king. One school of thought designates the king as Ben-Hadad of Damascus, a contemporary of Ahab of Israel (Ahituv 1993:246). Another deems Hazael of Damascus, a contemporary of Jehu of Israel, as the erector of the stele (Biran & Naveh 1995:11). Whichever interpretation we use will thus impact on our perception of the period spanning the time of Ahab to Jehu, that is, a period of either peace and freedom, or one of revolt and subjugation.

The person or body who commissioned the erection of the stelae or monument Was it done as a glorification of a king's victories in war, or does it reflect his building achievements? Or maybe it concerned mundane matters such as law ordinances and edicts. For whatever reason, the fact is that stone was seen to be everlasting and consequently an engraving into such a hard

substance was eternal and the message it conveyed for eternity. A king, or conqueror, would put such a medium to good purpose, with either suitable embellishments, or necessary omitments. Once we have made allowance for such factors, we can proceed to apply the information, contained within the source, to supplement our knowledge of an event or the characters involved in that specific incident.

We have extra-Biblical sources which, to a lesser or greater degree, give insight into the achievements and renown which Omri and Ahab had acquired. Except for the Moabite stone, which was found in Palestine, the rest are of Assyrian origin, namely, the Monolith Inscription, the Black Obelisk and sundry inscriptions. Herewith a short description of each:

3.2.1 The Moabite Stone

Also known as the Mesha Stone (see illustration 2), this slab of black basalt was discovered by F Klein at Dibon. Its height is 1 meter and its width 600mm. It is the longest inscriptional source ever found in Palestine. This stele was erected by King Mesha of Moab in commemoration of his successful rebellion against the son(s) of Omri (Ahab?) (Joram?). The Old Testament account (2 Ki 3) is given confirmation by this stone (Jones 1974:71-73), since we read that Omri received tribute from Mesha, and that Mesha rebelled. But, there is a discrepancy between the Biblical account and that of Mesha, because we learn that Mesha did not win his attack on Joram (2 Ki 3:27). The Moabite Stone thus reflects the care to be taken when one 'reads' such conflicting renderings of an event, and that one should only extract 'inherent' information from such a source. Thus we can say that Omri and Ahab had subdued Moab, and had received tribute, a fact which implies military power and effective use of that power (Scheffler 2000:86-89).

3.2.2 The Monolith Inscription

This stele (see illustration 3) was found in Kurkh and is our earliest annales text of Shalmaneser III. The stele, which has the figure of Shalmaneser engraved on its face, was commissioned by this Assyrian king in commemoration of his military campaigns towards the West. The battle of Qarqar (853 BCE) is given in detail and reflects the king's claim to victory at Qarqar. Since he did not go beyond Qarqar to consolidate his 'victories', his claim to fame seems nebulous indeed. The importance of this inscription, however, lies in the descriptive information given on the

military might of individual kings of the anti- Assyrian coalition. Besides the forces of Adad-idri of Damascus of 1200 chariots, and those of Irhuleni of Hamath of 700, we learn that 'Ahab the Israelite' had 2000 chariots in the field. This battle, and its implications, is not mentioned in Scriptures. Rather than the battle of Qarqar, in which the military strength of Ahab is forcibly demonstrated, the chroniclers detailed the 'battle of Carmel' (Gordon 1985:150-151). The high number of chariots are questioned by some scholars, but considering the high esteem the Assyrian Inscriptions denote to the 'house of Omri', we can infer that Ahab did indeed possess so many chariots, and the horses to go with it. Excavations at Jezreel have revealed large, open areas, which could have been the necessary space needed to muster horses and to manoeuvre chariots. Given these factors, *in combination,* it becomes possible to gain a perception of Ahab as a very able and competent monarch.

3.2.3 The Black Obelisk

This stele (see illustrations 4a & 4b) was found by Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894)at Nimrud, the ninth century BCE capital of Assyria. The 2 meter high stele was commissioned by Shalmaneser III to illustrate the submission of five kings from the surrounding kingdoms. The twenty panels (five to each side), vividly portray the submission of the five kings and the scope of their contributions to Shalmaneser. Camels, horses, an elephant, monkeys and so forth, are some of the exotic items paraded before the king. The second row from the top shows the kneeling figure of Jehu, the'son of Omri'. This submission of Jehu is not recorded in the Bible and can be attributed either to an effort to minimise the 'humbling' of the king, or to another of Shalmanesers' exaggerated claims to conquests. Calling Jehu 'son of Omri' may suggest family ties, but, more likely this was Assyria's way of reference to a kingdom which became famous because of the competence of its king, Omri, and the subsequent greatness of 'the son of Omri', namely Ahab (Scheffler 2000:36-41).

3.2.4 Sundry Assyrian Inscriptions

1) The Nimrud Slab Inscriptions, commissioned by Adad-Nirari 111 (805-782 BCE), contains his boast of his conquests of various cities, of which he names the following '... Tyre, Sidon, Humri (Omriland, Israel), Edom...' (Luckenbill 1926:262-263).

2) Fragmentary annals, of Tiglath-Pileser 111, (the biblical Pul-745-727 BCE), commemorates

his conquest of cities and lands. This Assyrian king mentions '...Abilakka which is on the border of Bit-Humria' (House of Omri, Israel) (Luckenbill 1926:292).

The ramifications, theories and arguments, on the use of *OMRI* in these inscriptions, are of a very diverse nature. What is of essence though is that the appellage, *OMRI*, remained in use long after the last of the Omrid Dynasty had been exterminated by Jehu in 841 BCE.

Though our extra- Biblical sources on the Omrids are very scarce, and depend for the most part on Assyrian material, we must keep in mind the possibilities that Israel might also have had their own share of inscriptional records. Van Seters (1997:301) observes that the Biblical accounts of military campaigns and building activities ' ... would in all likelyhood have been information that could have been taken from memorial inscriptions'. On the other hand, we have the laws which forbid 'graven' images to be made (Ex 20:4), and chances are that monuments, in honour of their kings, were not erected by the Israelites or the Judeans (Scheffler 2000:41). In contrast the Assyrians did not have these restrictive rules, and therefore we have sources which give a good indication of the enemy's point of view, and thus acts as a valuable aid to a new understanding and interpretation of the Biblical text.

Our reliance therefore, on extra-biblical sources, must be tempered with the realisation that 'outside' sources will reflect reports made by peoples who were not, as Israel and Judah were, committed to report in covenantal obligation. Their versions of events will be based on their own experiences and perceptions, not only from their religious, but also from their political or social standpoint. So, inevitably there will be contradictions and disagreements. These sources should be scrutinized for their contents, placed in context, seen to be a report from the opposing camps' 'worldview', and must be correlated with biblical and archaeological material, in order to create a picture which is free from subjective bias and partialities.

Our final source, which pertains to the discipline of archaeology, constitutes the trio needed for a balanced, overall evaluation of the historical context of ancient Palestine.

3.3 Archaeological Sources

Archaeology is the science which attempts to recover the past by means of materially cultural evidence, either found through excavations, or else discovered by chance. In contrast to Biblical texts, which have a history of change and adaptations to specific contexts and specific audiences, the artifactual sources have lain in the soil , unchanged, with no adaptations done to it, and with no later, sporadic thoughts and ideologies impinged on its surfaces.

This is especially true of inscriptural evidence (*stelae,* tablets) and everyday utensils (pottery, weaponry), since the material remains still have and contain their original mould. In the case of the *inscriptional* evidence we are provided, to some extent, with the type of data which was often omitted from biased and one-sided *written* sources. The elite classes had the prerogative to produce written records, a privilege they used to exalt the deeds of their own kind, and one which most certainly was not used to portray the circumstances of the populace!

Archaeological sources provide us with glimpses, not only of royal lifestyles and the palaces needed for such a way of life, but also of the way in which the ordinary people lived. We discover the architectural patterns of their houses, the techniques they used in the manufacturing of their tools and weaponry, and the style of the pottery they preferred and produced. In the process we also get some insight into the social and economical conditions of their times. Wares of foreign origin, or ones made of expensive and imported materials, are indications of healthy trade relations with other lands, and therefore a sign of peaceful times and prosperity. In like manner the lack of good quality wares, or debris layers of destruction, give an indication that there were troubled times of unrests and wars, or of oppression of the people by means of heavy taxes, which resulted in poverty.

However, care should be taken to keep all aspects of archaeological findings in balance, since 'The distinction between what can be learned from the artifact alone and what is to be learned when they are interpreted in connection with written sources become especially crucial when the written sources (*or the archaeological materials involved*) are themselves open to divergent interpretations' (Miller 1987:46). When, for instance, the archaeologist J Garstang

excavated at Jericho (1930-36) and found collapsed walls, he designated them as the remains of Joshua's capture of the city (Jos 6:20). This interpretation was an actual extention of the biblical report, but it sufficed, since it confirmed the biblical 'conquest' story. In later excavations done by Kathleen Kenyon (1952-58), these same walls were found to have belonged to the Early Bronze Age (circa 2300 BCE). She also found that no large city had existed at the Jericho site at the time of Joshua's campaigns (circa1250 BCE). Such hard facts however, should not be seen as the Alpha and the Omega of the Jericho saga, since archaeological sources cannot *deny a historical nucleus*, which in the case of Jericho most certainly exists (destructions did occur), albeit not the destruction incurred by Joshua.

We should also be especially aware that structural remains can pose problems of another kind, namely, that at some time in the past human hands could have changed the original function of the edifice. Renovations to the building, or the re-use of other material to either embellish or strengthen an existing one, can cause difficulties as to when it was erected and to its original purpose. We therefore have to keep in mind that an archaeological source is a silent source, and that it can only start to speak to us if it has been correlated and assimilated with the other material on site, and by the additional use of Biblical and extra-Biblical sources.

Further elaboration on these silent witnesses to the past shall be made in Chapter five, where I shall discuss the discipline of archaeology, and all its applications, more fully. However, since achievements rest upon the capabilities and circumstances of the achiever, I feel that short sketches, of each Omrid within his contextual realities, is necessary. Without these realities each Omrid would have operated within a vacuum. There would be no record available to reconstruct their environment and the way they had handled that environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 THE OMRIDS WITHIN CONTEXTUAL REALITIES

When kingship was introduced, it was in conjunction with a covenant between the king, his council and his people. This covenant did not explicitly limit the powers of the king, but obliged him to observe the laws and statutes of Israel, and that is why the prophets saw themselves as entitled to raise their voices if a king disregarded these laws. Their understanding of a monarch was of a 'just king' one who had his place in the city gates, where the citizens gathered, and where he distributed justice amongst his people (Lemche 1995:129). This was the popular image prevalent in the Ancient Near East, as was also the notion that the king was a client, not necessarily of another king, but always of a god. And in Israel therefore, the king was the client of the God of Israel (Lemche 1995:129). If any injustices occured, the prophets saw it as a breakdown in the covenant between God and the king. The ' special status' of the prophets then allowed them the compulsion to confront the king and to berate him for his 'neglects' of duties. These 'neglects' are very obvious when we read of the kings of Israel, especially the Omrids.

So, who were the Omrids? Can we glean their character and accomplishments by a careful reading of 'between the biblical lines'? And when we do meet them there, can we place and set them, adequately, against the times in which they lived? Yes, to a certain extent it is possible to discern the political, economical and social conditions which prevailed whilst they occupied the throne of Israel, since the marriages they contracted, the wars they fought, the sieges, the famines and oppressions, all reflect actions and reactions to specific circumstances.

But, we cannot go much further beyond these biblical realities. Why? Because the authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles did not specifically locate these kings within a factual and historical context, did not perceive of the strains and tensions underlying their internal and external policies and programs; did not grasp the inevitable conflicts, violence and bloodshed inherent in the substantiation of kingship. Instead, the Omrids have been set against the wrath and denouncements of the prophets and, ultimately, against the theological presuppositions of the Deuteronomists, who determined the facts and the material which they either included

or omitted from their Deuteronomistic history work.

We therefore have to retrace our steps to those long gone centuries and then ask questions such as:Upon what basis did the power of a king lie? Did it lie with violence and unrestricted use of weaponry? With 'inherited' legitimacy? With 'acquired' legitimacy? Was it based on charismatic qualities? Or did it depend on the support of all of the people, or only on some of the people such as the politicians, theologians and the nobility? (Schulte 1994:134). The ultimate fact is that monarchic power, whether benevolent or malevolent, had to be imposed in order to express the king's right to rule, and was thus of necessity close to absolute.

These powers find echo within the texts, such as for example, Ahab's acquirement of the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite (1 Ki 21), or in David, the perfect king, who imperfectly desires the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and has no hesitation in sending Uriah to his death in battle (2 Sm11:2-26). The realities of these incidents reflect the consequences of *the power of kingship*, a power saturated not only with ruthlessness and selfsurvival priorities, but one which was imbued with the determination to realize grandiose schemes, whether it be the erection of monumental structures or the fortifications of their cities. Pharaoh Ramesses' (circa 1304-1237) construction of the cities of Pithom and Pi- Ramesses (possibly by Hebrew slaves, Ex 1:11), constitute but an example of the immense power a king could wield (Millard 1985:77-79).

In like manner Omri and Ahab established and enlarged their cities, not as a punitive exercise in town planning, but to confirm their power and authority. And, concurrently with these powers which enabled them to strengthen city walls, erect new and stronger gates and position military barracks within the city, would be the oppression and intimidation inherent in such power structures. The most impressive act though, would be the establishing of a completely new Capital city. A new seat of power was, by implication, a visual and tangible symbol of conquest and the right to a legitimate occupation of the throne (Whitelam 1986:172).

However, a new Capital, besides being a costly enterprise, could also represent a tangible break with the previous governing body. Saggs (1984:97-98) in his elucidating work on Assyria, makes an 'informed guess' that major cities, but especially capital cities in the Ancient

East, quickly developed an assembly of important officials and influential personages, who tended to become a hereditary 'powerful entrenched group'. And, unless the king acceded to their wishes (exemption from taxes, grants of land, goods), they could become a risk to the king's authority. Hence the shift of authority, in order to create the necessary distance between an'old' power, and the 'new' power.

Thus, when the Deuteronomistic redactors picked up their pens and projected their woes onto the kings of Israel and Judah, we are compelled to read between the 'biblical lines', and to realise that we cannot invalidate the truths contained within the texts, but that we have to discern the truths *in their proper context*. As Halpern (1988:242) so succintly puts it, 'If H (Dtr) believed, or hoped to persuade others, that *baals* and *bamot* caused misfortune, his interest lay in recalling real misfortunes ....' And these misfortunes lay not so much with the practice of *baal* worship, as it lay with the practice of the king's power over his subjects.

We must perforce realise that the immense power which a king of ancient times wielded, remained for whole peoples and for centuries a dire reality, a reality of which we moderns have lost all notion of. A better understanding therefore, of those long gone kings and their achievements, can only emerge if we diverge from the theological rigidness of the biblical text and concentrate on the world in which they lived, so that we can discover the influences and circumstances which contributed to their power base, and which enabled them to leave to posterity the grandiose monuments of Samaria and the massive defense system of Jezreel.

4.1 Omri — founder of the Dynasty (885/884- 873/874 BCE)

The split of the United Kingdom, on the death of Solomon (931/930 BCE), brought into being the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Allthough the throne of Judah managed to keep to a succession of father to son, the same could not be said of the throne of Israel. This kingdoms' succession story reads like a roll-call of everchanging strangers, usurpations and assassinations. So, when Zimri (881-880 BCE), a chariot commander, murdered Elah the son of Baasha, and then proceeded to exterminate the entire royal family (1 Ki 16:8-14), it seemed like yet another repetition of the general pattern of usurp and kill.

At this time the Israelites were again fighting their perennial enemy, the Philistines, at Gibbethon, and when the troops heard about Zimri's violent actions, they '... made their commander Omri king of Israel' (1 Ki 16:16). Zimri retreated to the keep of Tirzah's palace, and committed suicide. This election of Omri though, rested on the acclamation of half the population, since a contender, Tibni, had the vote of '...half the people of Israel' (v 21). Tibni reigned for about four years and ' ... lost his life and Omri became king' (1 Ki 16:22).

These events reflect the complexity of the situation (politically, socially and religiously) in the North, and is proof of the difficulties which existed in Israel at constitutional level, since we see here another attempt by the North to elect its king (Soggin 1984:201,202). However these attempts for Israel's throne had, up to now, consisted of violent behaviour, and the wholesale killing of potential contenders. Bright (1981:238) argues that this is due to a kingship based on a charismatic tradition as had occured in the days of the judges, which meant that the validity of a dynastic succession was not acknowledged, but that the new state '... could not afford such instability and the charismatic ideal collided with this fact'. Soggin (1984:191) finds it improbable that a 'charismatic' concept of kingship as presented by the Deuteronomist ever existed here, because Israel's geographical position, and her spheres of production (agriculture, cattle rearing, crafts), leads him to observe that the North, having such lucrative features, 'almost cried out to be exploited'.

So, what can we deduce from the biblical source? Omri, as an army commander, was placed in a position from which it was easier, than most, to show and exercise his strength. An army is a power based back-up of manpower and war machines. It is also likely that he may have been of Canaanite extraction, with his ancestral home in Jezreel, which would put him amongst the Israelites, as well as his own people (Gray 1977:364). Another viewpoint is that Omri was of the House of Issachar, since the Omrids had their own estate at Jezreel, a town located in the valley of the lot of Issachar (Mazar, B 1992:119-123). However, whichever claim, or any other, is the valid one, it does not detract from the fact that the Northern kingdom was not as homogeneous as the Southern kingdom was, and that may have been the reason why Omri had to wait a period of four years before he could consolidate his victory over Tibni. However, he did have the staying power to wait out a period of time which must have been very

unstable and riddled with faction unrest.

The Capital city of the North, Tirzah, was situated on the hill road from Shechem to the plain of Jezreel. It may have been Baasha who had developed her into the Capital of Israel (Gray 1977:367). However, during Omri's siege of this city, the palace was burnt down by Zimri, which forced Omri either to rebuild or to relocate. He chose relocation, an act probably influenced by several factors such as an ambition for ownership of a personal seat of power, severance from the connotations of the previous regime (Baasha, Zimri) and the founding of a city with strong defensive and trade possibilities. Thus Omri bought the hill of Shemer which was strategically situated, surrounded by fertile valleys and on routes running towards the Sharon plain and the Phoenician coast, and renamed it Samaria.

This choice highlights, more than any other, the actions of a capable man, one with enough vision to plan for the immediate, as well as the distant future. His personal possession of Samaria (as David had done with Jerusalem), enabled Omri to leave the city to his descendants and so found a dynasty (Gray 1977:366). Such an initial step, towards a personal possession, would inevitably be followed by the aggrandizement of the city, and the subsequent fame attached to such an achievement. The spade of the archaeologist would vindicate aspects of the splendour of this city of Omri and his dynasty.

The Deuteronomists' grievance on Omri's 'apostacy', has antecedents in the 'apostacies' of all previous kings of Israel, and would find echo in succeeding monarchs of that kingdom. But of course, we know that Israel was not an isolated island in a sea, but that she was part of the same geographical landmass as her neighbours were. These neighbours had their own gods to worship, and these foreign gods would inevitably exercise an influence in Israel. It is however highly unlikely that Omri, because of this factor, arranged the marriage of his son Ahab to the *baal*-worshipping Jezebel of Sidon on the grounds of religious convictions! The marriage was an alliance, indicative of political acumen and economic lucre; it was a case of rapprochement between two countries, of fruitful employment and adequate returns.

Omri 'rested with his fathers'. This expression was applied when someone died a non-violent

death, which means that Omri's demise was thus peaceful, as opposed to the deaths of his predecessors. Since the text mentions no apparent conflicts or wars Omri must, at the time of his death, have attained sufficient political and military status to be able to control, and to ward off, such eventualities.

Therefore, despite the biblical negativity on Omri, it becomes apparent that he was a successful monarch, one who must have used the normative means and methods, of his times, in order to achieve a kingdom to bequeath to his son Ahab.

4.2 Ahab — consolidator and builder (874/873-853 BCE)

The Biblical texts mention no uprisings, violence or even contenders to the throne, on the death of Omri. We can thus surmise that Omri bequeathed a stable and secure kingdom to his son Ahab. No mention, or very little, is made of the political importance, and of the social and economical input emanating from such an accomplishment, since the authors' concentration was solely on the religious aspect of Omri's reign. This same relentless perspective, with its limited understanding of the capabilities of Omri, was also applied to Ahab and his reign over the Northern Kingdom. This contrasts vividly with the prominence given to the role the prophets play in the narratives on Ahab. They signify deeply religious and moral standards and tell of Israel's relationship and obedience to the God of Israel. The most prominent one, Elijah, was not only '... a figure so eerie and so awe-inspiring that his deeds became legendary .... *but* ...' he embodied the strictest tradition of Yahwism' (Bright 1981:246). But, as Bright also so rightly states: 'were it not for the stories told about him ... we should scarcely know of the doings of Ahab and Jezebel at all' (1981:246).

We are informed that Ahab had a temple built for *Baal* in Samaria (1 Ki 16:32) which, of course, was no more than the temples Solomon had built for his foreign wives! (1 Ki 11:1-8). Jezebel, the foreign wife of Ahab, was indeed a worshiper of *Baal Melqart* and *Asherah*. It was also a fact that the Northern Kingdom was a conglomerate of Canaanites and Israelites, and that a state policy fostering *Baalism* would not have been received with shock, but would have been welcomed by many (Bright 1981:245). Elijah's battle on Mount Carmel (1 Ki 18),

indicates that 'paganism' was practised from the elite down to the masses on the floor. However, despite these paganistic influences, Ahab must have remained 'Israelite by religion', as indicated by the theophoric names he gave his sons, namely, Ahaziah and Joram (Jehoram).

However, the prophetic narratives do address socio-economic and techno-environmental realities, and the data points directly to conflict, systematic change and the plight of the masses. (Chaney 1986:68-74). The three years of drought in Samaria, and her surround, no doubt led to the foreclosure of many peasant farm holdings, to famine, starvation and death. The 'miracle' stories grant us access to the severe deprivations which existed. Elisha provides enough oil to a widow, in order to sell the oil, so as to redeem her two sons which had been taken by a creditor as a pledge for repayments (2 Ki 4:1-7). The widow of Zarephath has no food to sustain herself and her son, and thus cannot give bread to Elisha (1 Ki 17:11).

In 1 Kings 21:1-14 we read that Naboth's vineyard was appropriated. Though this action is laid squarely at Jezebel's (and Ahab's) door, it is nevertheless a measure of the pattern of 'social stratifications' which had manifested itself in Israel. As I have stated at the beginning of this chapter, the ruling elite had no compunction about the peasant classes, since they saw themselves as entitled to wield their power, and, as observed by Chaney (1986:56), '... the lives of the ruling elite in Israel and Judah had more in common with the ruling elite of the Near Eastern monarchies than with the peasants, artisans and expendables of their homelands'. Consequently, when the drought forced Ahab to seek fodder for his (chariot) horses, mules and cattle (1 Ki 18:1-6), he did so in the belief that it is his prerogative to save the royal animals at all costs. Hence we can surmise that all available fodder was confiscated, and that the peasant had to silently accept the starvation of his own mules and cattle.

Ahab seemingly has to answer to all abovementioned evils when Micaiah of Imlah prophesizes that Ahab's attack on Ramoth-gilead shall lead to ' ... sheep without a shepherd ...' (1 Ki 22:17). Ahab duly dies in this battle in fulfillment of this, and Elijah's, prediction, and the dogs lick up his blood in his chariot in Samaria (1 Ki 22:38). In this prediction Ahab gets his dues, unless the reader is struck by the contradictory phrase '... he rested with his forefathers ...' in 1 Ki 22:40! Be that as it may, if Ahab did die in battle, his was a brave death, since we read that he ' ...stayed

up in his chariot against the Syrians ...' (1 Ki 22:35).

The whole scenario is thus one of bad versus good, and it is in this context that most readers meet Ahab and his wife Jezebel. This is, of course, an unrealistic viewpoint regarding kingship, since a country cannot be ruled by religious ideology alone. The condemnations totally ignore the reality of Ahab's world and his involvement and insight into all the ramifications of international affairs, such as his handling of the Arameans, trade with the Phoenicians, battles like Qarqar, and peaceful relations with Judah. In short, the *Yahweh-Baal* struggle was only one aspect of the whole '...variegated rift that developed between the royal family and the general population...' (Miller & Hayes 1986:274).

The biblical source on Ahab ends with a very short mentioning of ' ...other acts and events ... the ivory house and all the cities he built ...' (1 Ki 22:39). It is here, in our study of Ahab and the accomplishments of these 'acts', that we find some necessary and complimentary material within sources of extra-Biblical (Assyrian Inscriptions, the Moabite Stone) and archaeological (sites of Samaria and Jezreel) origins.

The archaeological excavations at Samaria and the second residential site of the Omrids, Jezreel, have enhanced our perceptions of this terse reference to the building projects effected by Ahab. A completely new world opened up when Jezreel came to light. The enormous moat alone, speaks of the time, effort and expense which went into the fortifications of this city. It speaks of the power of kingship and of royal prerogatives. A combination of the structures, palaces and walls, found at the these two royal cities, provide ample proof that Ahab was no mediocre king in a paper palace!

Since I have already given a detailed description of the contextual world of Omri, a world obviously similar to that of Ahab, I deem it unnecessary to recap the whole scenario again. Suffice to say that Ahab had inherited a kingdom devoid of the usual violence associated with such a transfer of power. He could therefore consolidate, and further cement relations by a continuance of his father's political policy of open borders with Tyre, and also with Aram, Transjordan, Judah and Philistia, since this policy promised not only economic and cultural

development, but protection against Assyria as well. (Schulte 1994:139). And this is the kingdom which Ahab left to his son Ahaziah. One of prosperity and peaceful relations with the adjoining kingdoms.

4.3 Ahaziah --- brief interloper (853/852 BCE)

This son of Ahab became 'King of Israel in Samaria' (853/852 BCE), but reigned for two years only (1 Ki 22:51). His death is preceded by the startling (and to my mind informative) sentence, namely, 'Ahaziah fell through a latticed window in his roof-chamber in Samaria and injured himself ... he sent ... to inquire of *Baal-zebub* ... whether he would recover from his illness' (2 Ki 1:2). However, this act offended Yahweh, and He sent Elijah the Tishbite, to predict Ahaziah's death, as confirmation of Yahweh's punishment for such adherence to false idols. Ahaziah duly dies, without an heir, and is succeeded by his brother Joram. Unfortunately any other events, which could tell us more about the man, are recorded in the (non-extant) annals of the Kings of Israel.

And that is the extent of Ahaziah's existence, except for two other events. The first event happens in 1 Kings 22:48-50 and 2 Chronicles 20:35-37 where we note that the ships of Jehosaphat, king of Judah, had foundered at Ezion-geber on its way to Ophir. According to the 1 Kings version, Ahaziah's request, to aid and sail with Jehosaphat's men, is refused. Yet, in 2 Chronicles the Judean king allies himself with Ahaziah, but then looses his ships as a result of this 'unholy' alliance. The second event happens when, after Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel (2 Ki 1:1; 3:5; see chapter three).

What do we deduce from such brevity of information? Certainly we can be assured that Ahaziah wanted to maintain Israel's involvement in the lucrative maritime trade emanating from Ezion-geber. Admittedly there was a factor of greed for gain, but it made good economic sense to ensure the continuation of such a source of income. Quite possibly Jehosaphat refused because he took advantage of the death of Ahab in order to '... assert Judah's claim of independence from Omrid domination' (Miller & Hayes 1986:279). The fact that Ahaziah became incapacitated probably aided that aim. The rebellion of the Moabites

finds echo, throughout history, that strife and rebellion often go hand in hand when a king dies. This is because in the interim, before the reins of government are firmly taken in hand, confusion and lack of authority could be at the order of the day, thus facilitating a takeover or military *putsch*. Now, however, to return to the 'startling' sentence, mentioned at the beginning of this little tale of a 'brief interloper'.

How did Ahaziah fall? Was he pushed? Was he drunk? Did he lean against the lattice in order to look at something down below? Was the lattice window in a crumbling state, and so gave way to allow the king an ungracious fall? The unsympathetic treatment , by the redactor, does not take into account the full consequences of such a fall from the roof of a building. Serious complications such as broken limbs, fractured spine, head injuries and ruptured internal organs, can all contribute to a persons' being incapacitated, and in pain, and therefore desperate for any measure of curative treatment. Ahaziah's recourse to *Baal- zebub,* of Ekron, was probably due to its being one of the'medical' idols of the Philistines (Freedman 1972:167). Some scholars, such as Montgomery & Gehman (1960:349), posit that Ahaziahs' application to this god was most likely due to the '... ancient gods (*which*) had their specialities and fashions'. The text however, gives a theological verdict: Ahaziah will not leave his bed (which in all probability he could not), but will die there. This incident confirms that Ahaziah had been exposed to, and applied, the syncretic religions of the day.

The lattice window finds echo in the ivories found at Samaria and Nimrud.'The Woman at the Window' (See illustration 6) allude to the cult of *Astarte* (Phoenician), but also shows a lattice window, or balustrade, common to Near Eastern architecture. These windows had no glass, thus allowing the lattice work to promote cool breezes. They also gave an opportunity to see , but not to be seen. They were not 'hung' like modern windows, but opened and shut like doors (Freedman 1972:123). The 'roof- chamber' reflects another architectural feature of Israelite houses, namely, the use of upper stories, which comprised the sleeping quarters of the family. The mention of those sleeping quarters as being 'in Samaria' confirms the continued use of Omri's capital as a residence for royal occupation and royal use.

In conclusion therefore, we get an impression of Ahaziah as a weak and ineffectual king.

However, his reign was too brief, and with no opportunity to show his real mettle (whether there was any or none). His brother Joram (Jehoram) however, who succeeded him, seems to have genuinely achieved nothing.

4.4 Joram — last of the dynasty (852-841 BCE)

The account of the life of Joram is of very brief length indeed, even though he ruled for twelve years (852 -841 BCE). This sparseness could be due to several factors, one being that Joram may have been of a genuine 'mediocrity of character' (Soggin 1984:209), and thus did not merit any prominence in the narrative. Another factor finds form in an article on 'Joram, king of Israel and Judah' by John Strange (1975:200-201), who argues that Joram of Israel was in all probability also Joram of Judah. He postulates the following:

a) **The lack of any mention of the 'annals of Israel'**, in Joram's case, may indicate that the Deuteronomist did use a wide range of sources (as indicated by the wars against Moab and Edom), but that his sources supplied him with '... a Joram of Israel without any notice of his descent...' (1975:200). This meant that he had to present a limited version of Joram's rule.

b) **The Deuteronomist created a 'ghost' Joram of Israel**, to '...avoid that any of the descendents of David should have had any part in the apostate and abominable kingdom of Israel' (1975:201). Joram of Judah thus transforms into Joram of Israel, a descendent from Ahab, and therefore a candidate to be eliminated from the legitimate House of David.

The implication of Strange's viewpoint means a drastic revision of the competence of 'Joram of Israel', since we shall have to substitute 'mediocre' with something far more forceful, dynamic and powerful. However, until such time that we are assured of that truth, we have to resort to the text, where we find that the redactor does grant Joram some good deed, because 'He did remove the pillar of *Baal* which his father *(Ahab)* had made' (2 Ki 3:2). This is a contradiction, since such a pillar is not mentioned in Ahab's context. In the same breath, however, the author applies the by now well-known epitaph for the kings of Israel, namely, that Joram persisted in the sins into which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had led Israel (2 Kings 3:3).

Despite the fact that Joram was quite a number of years on the throne we are told only of

his continuance of the war against Moab, 'King Jehoram came from Samaria and mustered all Israel' (2 Ki 3:6). King Jehosaphat of Judah accompanied him on this campaign, which ended in the macabre scene where king Mesha of Moab took his eldest son and offered him as a whole-offering upon the city wall. The Israelites fled the scene, horrorstruck, and thus gave Mesha the opportunity to boast of his victory over Israel (the Moabite Stone).

The next mention of Joram occurs when we read of his alliance with Ahaziah of Judah against Hazael, king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. This battle against the Arameans confirms the evershifting alliances between the two kingdoms and the dire necessity of the Omrids to protect their northern and north-eastern approaches. Joram was wounded in this battle, and returned to Jezreel, there to be confronted by Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi, who ' ... seized his bow and shot Jehoram between the shoulders; the arrow pierced his heart ...', and so Joram died and was thrown onto Naboth's plot of land in Jezreel. (2 Ki 8:28,29; 9:17ff). Joram's death comes in fulfillment of the words of Elisha the prophet to Jehu, the future king of Israel, 'I anoint you king ... you shall strike down the house of Ahab...' (2 Ki 9:6,7). Joram's persistent use of Jezreel is indicative of the security this well fortified city could provide but, sadly, also indicates his inability to constrain and to handle the rebellions and wars which had erupted.

The fact is that the rot had already settled in, despite the effective rules of the founding fathers, Omri and Ahab. Joram's passiveness (no mention is made of any great deeds or acts), and a general feeling of antagonism against the 'yoke of the Omrids', probable speeded up the process of rebellion. The prophet Amos' harangues, on the 'selling of the innocent for silver' and 'they grind the heads of the poor into the ground' and 'you who crush the destitute' are indications that power, greed for wealth and unlimited authority, corrupts and oppresses (Am 2:6,7; 4:1). The accumulation of all these factors resulted in Joram becoming the 'last of the Dynasty' His death, at the hands of Jehu, occured outside the gates of Jezreel.

4.5 Summary of the contextual world of the Omrids

In the preceeding chapters, I have tried to give an indication of the impact the geographical context and the neighbouring peoples could , and must have had on the course of the history

of the Kingdom of Israel (as well as Judah), because when a monarchy was introduced, they lost their egalitarian status and became more like the kingdoms around them. The kingdom of Israel had no option but to conform and to integrate, to adapt, make concessions, participate in the good times and the bad, and to ride out all the imposed wars and conflicts. And at the spearhead of all of these conditions was the king, as the implacable representative of his country's political stability, religious policy, economic prosperity and social well-being.

Inevitably her kings, would become more and more like the oppressive, power-wielding kings around her. This state of affairs would be a dramatic reversal of the previous 'freedom' the people thought they had. But the truth of the matter is that a king cannot be 'poor and powerful' at the same time (his subjects must pay taxes and dues), he cannot be 'just' to everyone (justice for one can be injustice for another and *vice versa*), he cannot cut communications and trade relations with his neighbours (it would lead to social and economic isolation), and he cannot refuse to take notice of the religious practices, customs and cultures of sections of the population (this would lead to friction and confrontations).

The extent and impact of the reigns of the Omrids finds some evidence in the extra-biblical sources which I mentioned in Chapter four. Due to their effective use of their geographical context and their diplomatic and economic alliances, they were in a position to commission and realize building projects which were on the same, and even greater, grand scale than those in the surrounding kingdoms. The visible remains of fortifications (Hazor, Megiddo, Dor, Samaria, Jezreel), the principal of an independant fortified acropolis (Samaria), water systems (Megiddo, Hazor), storehouses at Megiddo, expansion of the sacred precinct at Dan (Scheepers 2000:41,42,72; & Scheffler 2000:119,122), are testimony to the capabilities of the Omrids.

Therefore, in order to get a 'fuller' picture of Omrid accomplishments, let us go to the royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel. There the discipline of archaeology shall then be applied to effect persuasions which will evince the grandeur and achievements of these two royal cities.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ECHOES FROM THE PAST

As inferred in chapters two and three of this dissertation, Biblical Archaeology is a science which attempts to recover the Biblical past of the land of Palestine and her neighbours (cf 2.2) by means of excavated material such as structures, artifacts, et cetera (cf 3.3). However, most of these discoveries are 'silent', in the sense that a certain degree of guesswork is needed in order to establish their identity, and thus their original place and usage in society.

Ideally therefore, would be the presence of written sources, to facilitate an understanding of archaeological findings. Unfortunately this combination does not allways solve the problem. We can find echoes of this type of combination just a few decades ago, when the Bible and the 'history' it contained was the norm by which archaeology was tried and tested. Theology and archaeology went hand in hand towards an uncritical evaluation of discoveries made at tells. Consequently archaeological remnants were used to demonstrate the 'proof' of the Bible. Despite the enormous steps archaeology has taken towards an objective appraisal of all discoveries, and the application of various disciplines and techniques to clarify uncertainties, there are still today conservative branches of religious denominations, and members of the general public, who claim 'confirmation' or 'proof' of the Biblical record by archaeology (Drinkard 1989:22). Our knowledge of a 'new' city at Samaria, is also based on Scriptures. It can thus become very easy to convince ourselves that structures found on site are due to Omri and subsequent kings. But we can only come to such a conclusion once we have taken the whole context of the tell into consideration, that is, its geographical and occupational history, before it was bought by Omri.

Another echo from the early decades of archaeology, was the uncontrolled plundering of tombs, graves, ancient palaces, monuments, et cetera. Such treasure hunts resulted in a lack of disciplined excavation and recordkeeping of any artifacts found. Haphazard digging caused disturbances of the soil wherein the objects lay, and breakages of pottery or delicate artware. Uncontrolled demolition of walls and structures destroyed indications of the types of buildings they were. Small items such as pieces of inscribed clay, seals, sherds, were considered valueless and were damaged, or else simply disappeared onto wasteheaps. And yet, it is often these small

'insignificant' bits and pieces which tell a better story than the goldplated bust or statue of a king or emperor.

But, amongst the undisciplined and destructive looters, there were the many who tempered their actions, and who opened up unknown worlds, and who shared their discoveries with the general public. They set in motion new perceptions, and brought about thought processes which looked not only towards 'Biblical' Palestine, but which strove to look beyond that known world. Austen Henry Layard (1817-1874) was such a man. His excavations at the Assyrian city of Nimrud (ancient Calah) and the discoveries he made there, made him realise the significance of his finds. Thus, when he had unearthed the 'Black Obelisk'(cf chapter three, 3.2.3) in 1845, he made drawings of the pictures and writings which were on the obelisk. These he almost immediately sent off to scholars to be deciphered. Our knowledge today, of the obelisks' message, namely, the tributes of five kings (Jehu, king of Israel included) to Shalmaneser 111 (see illustration 4b), is not only grounded in the abilities of the decipherers Edward Hincks and Henry Rawlinson, but also in the person of Layard himself. He had the ability to recognise the importance of his find, and the foresight to make drawings of the images on the stele (a record thus).The biblical text does not mention such an act of obeisance by Jehu. This king of Israel, and his contextual world, thus needs a reassessment, especially when we compare the textual justification of his elimination of the House of Omri (Ahab) with the tribute payer on bended knees before the mighty Assyrian king!

Similarly Layards' discovery (1849-1851) of the 'Siege of Lachish' reliefs at Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, has contributed to our knowledge of that fearful Assyrian attack on the Judean city. Other pictorial evidences, of the machinations of Assyrian warfare (see illustrations 8a & 8b), portray the merciless power of these conquerors and the drastic consequences of defeat, since the Assyrian reputation for cruelty, as well as their deportation policies, are fully depicted on these various reliefs (Millard 1985:119,120, cf Scheffler 2000:36-45). We can thus postulate the dreadful fear the peoples of Israel, Aram, Ammon, Judah, Phoenicia, had of this enemy. And we can understand Ahab's building projects regarding the (re)fortifications of key cities such as Samaria, Jezreel, Megiddo, Hazor, Dor and Dan. The erection of new, or strengthening of existing walls, the reconstruction of water systems, storerooms to contain food

supplies, and so forth, would all be efforts towards safeguarding the main cities, not only against possible Aramean attacks, but against attacks from the Assyrians.

These few examples echo a meagre presentation of the abuse and good use of archaeology in the past. But, a journey had been started which would eventually arrive at a destination called the Discipline of Archaeology. It was not an easy journey and at times seemed to reverse its steps, to go back into the realms of ' archaeology for sale, whether for cash, ideology, or just plain and simple self-esteem'. Unfortunately too, a lot of baggage came along on the journey. So, allthough we are at a point where we can apply various strands of disciplines to enhance archaeology, we still have to contend with much embedded data.

5.1 The discipline of archaeology

Our modern day perception and understanding of Biblical Archaeology is based not only on the various categories of sources, but also on the application of different disciplines (fields of expertise).These scientific approaches have turned excavations into disciplined and controlled exercises where all finds are correctly recorded and labled as to their stratigraphic layer and surrounds. Careful drawings are made of the objects found, photos are taken, measurements and sizes are recorded and all other relevant data is written down. On site are the specialists who, in their capacity to inspect, analise, interpret and reconstruct, represent practically all the avenues of study available today. A few examples from Drinkards' (1989:24) list, will give ample evidence of the diversity of these disciplines, and therefore of the many facets which can be discovered of each archaeological object found: thus ceramic specialists, cultural anthropologists, geologists, paleologists, metallurgists, agronomists, zoologists, et cetera; and also the people with special skills such as gem cutting, computer programming, laboratory techniques (testing, analysing), et cetera. Then there is satellite technology, supplying aerial photos of ancient river and road beds, and radar to locate buried structures, and so forth. In fact, as Drinkard (1989:24) states at the end of his impressive list: 'The amount of information that can be extracted from a modern excavation or survey is limited only by the archaeologist's imagination ....'

As I have mentioned, such advanced and technological ways of thinking was practically non-

existant decades ago. We consider how easily, then, small items such as seals could have been cast aside, because they were not recognised or tested as valuable. And we consider how easily, nowadays, those same seals are turned into some semblences of the past. Our realization, of these 'seal stones,' is that these little objects of craftmanship were usually made from precious gemstones such as amethyst and agate. The engraver would cut the customers choice of design into the stone. Designs varied from sphinxes, to scarab beetles, to plants, to persons in the act of worship, to gods and goddesses. The name of the client could also appear on the seal, making it a sort of personal identification. Because of the command in Exodus 20, the Israelites only had inscriptions on their seals. These seals are therefore sources of infinite value, since we learn about prevalent names of certain periods, prevalent influences, styles, traditional and religious customs, and of relationships, such as, ' a servant to the king', 'daughter of X' (Millard 1985:112,113; cf Mazar 1990:505-507).Most of above-mentioned knowledge comes from application of various disciplines, such as traditions of gem cutting, the seal's geological area of origin, identification of scripts and writing and spheres of influences (see illustration 7).

In like manner the small pieces of ivories, discovered in Assyria and found at Samaria, can be related because of the resemblance they show in their sorts of decorations and motiffs (see illustration 6). In their campaigns of conquest, the Assyrians had ransacked the palaces of Samaria (720 BCE) and made off with furniture inlaid with carved ivory. Items which could not be carried away, were stripped of any (ivory) adornment. A reconstruction of the origins, decorations and eventual fate of these ivories can thus be effected by means of interdisciplinary applications. And that is why it was also noticed that the quality of some of the pieces indicate that those ivories came from other sources, and were made to order, since they show distinctive Assyrian styles and motiffs. But, all would have drawn on the craftmanship of Syria and Phoenicia (Kenyon 1971:88).

The disciplines of archaeology though, means more than the employment of the right expert or specialist. Disciplines also entail the application of methods and certain approaches in order to reach a relative answer to a question or a problem posed.

5.1 Methods, theories and applications

How does one apply a discipline, in order to get 'as accurate as possible' information? Where to start? What to retain? What to discard? When to stop? The obvious answer (some may not agree) is to start with everyday items and usages thereoff. By doing thus, one at least starts with 'known' commodities, which can act as measuring rods for something which is either similar or else appears to be related. It does involve interpretation, but it is an area within the boundaries of the familiar and so can, either hugely or fractionately, be recognized and tentatively placed within a context.

Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) was conducive towards a method for a scientific study of Archaeology. His excavations and observations in Egypt, together with an exact and systematic approach to any finds he made, led him to develop a dating sequence of pottery styles that correlated with dynastic and predynastic events. This attention to pottery (including sherds) was based on the fact that pottery was an item of every day use, and consequently one which could be applied for infinite purposes. Though pottery could break into small pieces, those pieces (being composed of hardbaked clay) were virtually indestructable.

They could thus be pieced together and present tangible, usually decorated objects, which indicated certain lifestyles, changes of styles, influences of foreign peoples and different customs (Paul & Dever 1973:207-209; cf Mazar 1990:27; Moorey1981:24). Such changes of styles occured after the 'schism', when Israel and Judah developed different traditions of pottery making. In Israel characteristic form and decorations appeared. Pottery, with its burnished, red slip bowls and jugs could be traced to Hazor and Samaria. 'Samarian ware', however, included bowls with thick walls and a high foot, were either black or red slipped and were found only in the vicinity of Samaria (Mazar 1990:508).

During the course of an attack, jars, bowls, kraters, et cetera, were reduced to pieces, and lay where they fell or were smashed. Newcomers re-occupied and rebuilt onto the rubble, and so wars sponsored the consecutive layers of pottery debris formed on site. This process became the great contribution pottery sherds made towards a correlation between themselves and other objects found in the same layers, as well as *the layers found at other sites*. (Scheepers 1987:11).

Pottery can thus act as a method for establishing relative chronology. But, the danger of circular reasoning can ensue if a too rigid application, of above-mentioned methodology, is pursued. Random and unpredictable factors could have impacted not only on the original manufacturing and distribution of the items in question, but also on the rate of accumulation of debris in a tell. Accumulation of debris is not necessarily a straightforward exercise in which layer A follows layer B, follows layer C, et cetera, *all in straight horizontal lines* and with *uniform depths* of so many metres or centimeters. A direct indication of the "rate of passing time" can thus be hindered by the lack of such precise depositing of material (Moorey 1981 :69).

The application of scientific techniques, when examing the composition of clay objects, can lead to an identification of their material or geological sources, and thus to their origins or manufacturers. This in itself can chart the movements in time and space of various groups of peoples and their interaction with strange or foreign groups. Yet, Moorey (1981:90) warns that the role of pottery is like a blunt instrument, in need of sharpening, and should not to be used to argue for the presence or absence of a particular people on the basis of the presence or absence of the particular ware named after them.

As structures and artifacts were subjected to similar conditions of trials and tribulations as pottery, the same type of assessment should be done. But here we first have to take the following into consideration: are we using the biblical text as a basis for reconstruction? For example, do we use the 'cities for chariots and horsemen', which Solomon built, as a basis for stables at Megiddo or Hazor? Are we using our *own experience* of such a structure (the stables of our own times)? Do we understand the ancient architecture behind such edifices as administration buildings, palaces, storerooms, stables and temples? Or do we label all that appears monumental as 'palace', and those littered with votive offerings, as temples? Structures should, besides being the product of economic, social and religious requirements and functions, be adjudged as representative of the people who erected them but, again, not of a particular people on the basis of the presence or the absence of certain characteristics or building styles. Therefore, comparisons or analogies with the plans, and structures, of other sites in Palestine (or neighbouring countries), can be informative and enhance our understanding of material remains found during excavation. Moorey (1981:84,85) demonstrates the positive use of above-

mentioned practices when he mentions Ussishkins' application of groundplans, of Iron Age palaces in Syria, for the dating of the 'southern palace' (no 1733) at Megiddo. Because Ussishkin interpreted it as Solomonic. We are allowed some insight into the importance of Megiddo of that time, as well as a glimpse of the Temple at Jerusalem.

Structures, artifacts, writings, inscriptions, objects — the list is endless. These items all tell us 'something', whether of near-obvious recognition, or of tentative interpretation, since the mere fact of their presence indicates a relevance to peoples and the requirements of their existence. I shall therefore make use of such items, to describe and to explain the archaeological significance of such finds at Jezreel and Samaria, since each and every item has its own uniqueness. Because of these unique qualities, such as the massive moat at Jezreel, or the 'ivory palace' at Samaria, each structure has its place within an overall context. However interpretation is still a problem which can either mar or present a coherent picture of the immense achievements of the Omrids at these two royal cities. How then to ease or to facilitate the process of interpretation in order to attain such a purpose?

That which is needed, is a 'basis', something that stands apart from, and which is external to 'excavated discoveries'. And because of the special quality which this 'basis' has, there is the chance of reading a more comprehensive and understandable story than the one related by our usual archaeological, biblical and extra- biblical sources. And such a source is that very visible, very tangible and infinitely practical commodity called, the *TELL*. I owe William G Dever the recognition for this idea after reading his article, 'The Tell: Microcosm of the cultural process'(1996), wherein I realized the immense role the actual, physical 'Tell' played as a determinative factor of the existence of the cities which were built on its summit. The actual position of the tell dictated, though not wholly, but to a great extent, the way its inhabitants lived, and hence would have been reflected in the type, size and structures they erected.

This solid mass of earthy evidence mirrors the events that befell them, and reflects their reactions to those happenings (Scheepers 1987:5). I shall therefore devote some time to explain the significance of *TELLS*. In the process I shall attempt to make it clear that cities where founded for certain reasons and certain aims in mind, and as such will portray

characteristics and evidences, which will aid us in our assessment of the 'life' of that city, of its rulers, its inhabitants and of its eventual demise (or survival). In the process I shall attempt to show that the royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel had no real option but to be what they were to become. The *choice* of their location, the eventual tell, set the pattern for the history which the tell developed, and the manner in which it was used to accommodate the Omrids.

5.2 The Tell, a foil towards interpretation

The phenomenon called *TELL*, is something which finds itself predominantly in the Near East. It is a structure which is easily identifiable, since it is a (artificial) hill with a flat top and with relatively steep slopes. These steep slopes are the results of continuous human occupation of the same area, because successive generations built on top of the previous layer (see diagram 1). The shape of this hill will therefore contrast sharply with the natural hills in the vicinity, which will have more rounded tops and gentler slopes (Scheepers 1987:3).

But, when we seriously think about, and ask : What is a Tell?, we find that the answer is not just a simple matter of small or big cities on top of each other, and with their only considerations those of a good water supply and an easily defendable position. Dever (1996:38) points out that not enough significance emerges as to the realities of tells, and that a tentative overall typology of tells could be based on their size and shape , but that it should also be based on factors such as ' ... geographical settings, socio-economic organization, political structures, defensive requirements, technology and ... ideology in the broadest sense, including religion ....' Therefore, if these requirements can be met, it becomes easier, and possible, to understand the *reality of the tell, and its subsequent history.*

The significance thus, of the Tell as a 'Microcosm of the cultural process', is infinitely true, since the tell could not have been anything less than the place of daily existence, measured by the the needs and purposes of every man , woman and child, whether they were rich or poor, royalty or peasantry. The tells' physical being, would have enforced it to become imbued with specific connotations, such as, 'a place of' political impact, military strength, religious importance, social influences, good economic and trade relations, et cetera. And hence the

Tell, *itself*, becomes an archaeological 'remnant', one which will force us to look for signs and indications of the people who inhabitated it, and of the structures they needed to erect. Therefore, when looking at a tell we are looking at a certain choice , made at a certain time and for a certain reason and purpose. And once the inhabitants have settled, they would start to embellish on the available commodities, and improve on those which fall short. Those that are unavailable would either be manufactured or else acquired *via* passing traders, nearby villages or farm sites.

The uniqueness of a tell, thus, does not only lie in its water supply or the height of its walls, but is grounded in other factors which contributed to its specific progress, to ultimately reach a specific result. To illustrate this uniqueness, Dever (1996:39) tabulated this 'typology of tells' into sixteen different types, with each one given a designation of 'essential characteristics' I am now going to make use of this tabulation, to indicate how it becomes applicable to various tells and cities in Palestine. I have taken the liberty to mention Samaria and Jezreel in connection with more 'types of tell', than Dever did.In the process it will become obvious why Samaria was chosen by Omri, and hence its inevitable rise to that of a prosperous and flourishing capital city. Similarly Jezreel will portray the essential characteristics which gave rise to it becoming the second royal city of the Omrids.

According to Dever, the following types and characteristics apply:

Type of Tell	Characteristics of Tell	Examples of cities
1) Central Place or Hub	Good agricultural area, center location, crossroads, defensible, mixed economy, city or city state.	Megiddo, Gezer, Hazor , Jezreel, Samaria.
2) Middle Tier or Node	Good agricultural area, good comunication,	Beth Shemesh, Gezer, Hazor, (Jezreel).
3) Satellite	Agricultural potential, hinterland, fair communication, village or hamlet.	Tel Masos, En Gev
4) Marginal Zone	Semi-arid, isolated, specialized economy, usually small, but could be large	Arad, Jericho, Kadesh-Barnea

5) Industrial	Access to raw materials, good communications, highly specialized.	En- Gedi?
6) Buffer Zone	Natural region, border location. Crossroads, mixed culture.	Arad, Gezer, Hazor, Dan (Jezreel), (Samaria).
7) International Border	Major natural border, strategic, defensible, control of trade, may be politically subsidized	Dan , Hazor, Qadesh, (Jezreel) (Samaria).
8) Trade Routes	Major natural routes, strategic defensive location	Megiddo, Hazor, (Samaria) Rabbath-ammon, (Jezreel).
9) Water Supply	Near spring or water courses.	Jerusalem, Aphek, Samaria.
10) Port	Fresh water, seaport, trade a major factor, mixed cultures.	Acco, Dor, Jaffa
11) Fort	International or regional border, primarily defensive, relatively isolated, may be small tell.	Azekah, Kadesh- Barnea,
12) Religious Centre	Ideology and cult factors, traditional, longlived.	Jerusalem, Bethel, Dan, (Samaria)
13) Shrine	Regional cult centre, may have briefer history	Shiloh, Bethel
14) Political Capital	Deliberately chosen, politics dominant, focus on national life.	Samaria, Jerusalem
15) Regional, Administrative Center	Subordinate to national capital, evidence of deliberate dwelling.	Beersheva, Lachish, Jezreel
16) Symbolic Site	Makes a statement, likely a holding of elite or royalty	Samaria, Jezreel, Jerusalem, Ramat Rahel

As abovementioned tabulation indicates, these cities fit 'essential characteristics', albeit in some cases to a lesser or greater degree. And as a closer look will show, not only one but several of the numbered 'characteristics' could fit any one city at a time, for example Dan and Megiddo:

DAN was one of the Omrids' zone cities, since it was situated in the extreme north of Palestine. This city had to be of a defensive character and had to act as a type of buffer against invasions from the North and North-east. Situated as it was on the *Via Maris* route, it was in a position to control the trading of goods, but in the process must have been exposed to the various religious and cultural practices of those who passed through the city-gates. Thus, after the

schism, king Jeroboam I (931 BCE) found the unique position of tell Dan not only ideally suited to defend his border and trade flow, it fulfilled his need to establish a cult centre (1Ki 12:28).This was done, largely, to prevent his people from going to Jerusalem. However, one can project that Dan was not only an obvious choice due to its'essential characteristics', which facilitated easy access to various religious practices and cults, eg Phoenician, Syrian, but was also a city of ancient religious associations (Jdg 18 :14 ff). Biran's excavations (1968) of the cult center at Dan revealed an almost square construction *(bamah)* and a figure of the goddess *Astarte*. Indications were found of further rebuilding of the *bamah,* with its masonry of dressed stone laid in the header and stretcher fashion (see illustration 14), as evidenced also by the building projects of Ahab at Samaria and Megiddo. To this rebuilding of the bamah, Ahab also added a horned incence altar (Scheepers 2000:37-42).

MEGIDDO fitted a whole number of the characteristics of a specific tell.The first walled settlement occured in the Early Bronze Age, and its inhabitants probably chose this site because it had an abundant water supply, a fertile agricultural hinterland (Jezreel valley), and a trade route which passed close by. This trade route, the *Via Maris*, enabled trade contact with neighbouring states such as Phoenicia and Egypt. Given this advantageous position, it was inevitable that confrontations would occur. These confrontations resulted in the many wars which were fought at Megiddo. One such confrontation was when the Egyptian Pharaoh, Shishak 1 (ca 945-924 BCE), invaded Judah and Israel. The general view has been that Megiddo had been destroyed by Shishak. However, a fragment of a stele was discovered, which belonged to the type of stelae monarchs erected when they had succesfully campaigned against, and gained the submission of, a ruler and his city (cf the Assyrian Inscriptions). The fact of the existence of the stele gives '... a clear-cut indication that the city continued to exist as an organized settlement following his (Shishak's) conquest' (Ussishkin 1990:73). It is also an indication of the importance attached to a site such as Megiddo, and that Shishak did not destroy the city because of its *inherent characteristics* (strategic defence, water supply, trade, agricultural land).

Stratigraphical evidence indicates that the Solomonic city (level VA-1VB) is characterized by palaces, residential areas, weak defenses and a small gate (Solomonic peace times?). They were later replaced (level 1VA) by massive city walls and gates, storehouses and a water system.These

changes occured after the schism (Ussishkin 1990:74). This makes sense, because Megiddo was a prize to be cherished and not to be destroyed. The Omrids of Israel saw and recognised the strengthening of Megiddo as a necessary precaution against attacks from greedy foes. Their actions though, was in fact as a result of the tell's natural and inherent characteristics. Megiddo's history would thus always have been one of defence against enemies, interspersed with periods of relative peace, and as such it would have served its rulers.

Above-mentioned examples illustrate how, by means of its various 'characteristics', a tell becomes an 'archaeological artifact' which can aid in an (assessed) reconstruction of the tell's history. This is especially noteworthy when we apply it to the royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel.

SAMARIA. Her characteristics, as a geographically, centrally placed tell in the realm of the Omrids would endow her with administrative authority, which would mean the presence of large buildings which could accommodate clerks, scribes, tax collectors et cetera, whilst her proximity to trade routes and crossroads would make her vulnerable to raids and attacks. She would thus have good fortifications., and possibly also a treasury, which would act as the depository for the wealth accumulated by lucrative enterprises. As a political and symbolic tell she reflected the power of the ruler, as well as his wish to impose his personal stamp on the city. Thus we can expect to find imposing palaces, built by the best artisans wealth can buy, and furnished with luxury items. A centrally placed tell would be the gathering place of traders, soldiers, visitors and so forth, which would imply diverse religions and thus temples and cult centers. Now, most ancient cities had palaces, buildings for all purposes, and so forth. The difference lay in the power and capabilities of the one who ruled, which meant that the 'characteristics' were either put to good use or else none at all. Samaria's tell had a strong start with Omri and thus has become an archaeological artifact which, in turn, can act as a persuasion to investigate further.

In like manner we can also treat tell Jezreel as an archaeological artifact, because her inherent 'characteristics' placed her in a certain position, which would induce types of structures, being built there. Tell Jezreel was more exposed to attacks from surrounding kingdoms, and would therefore have a greater concentration of specific structures, such as fortifications, barracks, storerooms, cisterns, et cetera. Since the tell was also used as a royal residential abode, we can

surmise edifices such as palaces and the appurtenances to go with it. And, as in the case of Samaria, the tell becomes an archaeological artifact, persuading us to investigate further.

As can be seen, a tell would be an indication of the use its king or inhabitants could have, or might have, put it to. Having come this far, by means of a fairly long 'contextual' route, I shall now pen above-mentioned data onto the royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel.By emphasis on the tell, as an archaeological artifact, by application of the known sources, and by investigation of the structures and artifacts found on site, I hope to persuade Samaria and Jezreel to reveal some of their past grandeur, as a testimony to the achievements of the much belittled Omrids.

CHAPTER SIX

6 SAMARIA — GENESIS OF THE OMRIDS

Samaria started out as a "first"city (based on the biblical text). A map of the Biblical lands will show that the positions of the cities of Samaria, Megiddo and Jezreel form a triangle with almost isosceles precision. Megiddo and Jezreel have a distance of 15 km between them, whilst Samaria lies 35 km equidistant from these two. (Aharoni & Avi- Yonah 1968:9, 10). These three cities therefore formed an effective nucleus and central hub of political impact, military power and trade relations. The immense potential of such a tell as Samaria was to find expression in her becoming the Capital of the Kingdom of Israel, all of which factors Omri certainly had in mind when he bought the site. Added to these considerations, could also be that the site was probably the ancestral ground of Shomron of the tribe of Issachar, and of whom Omri was a kinsman. Also, the Omrids had a royal estate in Jezreel, a major town of Issachar (Mazar B 1992:119-123). But, Soggin (1984:204) though, deems the situation not as clear as all that, whilst Gottwald (1985:344) assesses Omri ' ... a professional soldier possibly of foreign origin (a Canaanite without Israelite grass-roots ...').

The Canaanite concept derives mainly from Alt's hypothesis (1959) that Omri was a Canaanite, and hence the establishment of two cities, namely, Samaria (in Canaanite territory) and Jezreel (in Israelite territory). Thus, instead of assimilation, the Omrids opted for a separation between the two distinct groups. Consequently, in Samaria the Omrids reigned ' ...according to the Canaanite model as dynastic rulers over their Canaanite subjects ...' and in Jezreel ' ... they reigned as (charismatic) Israelite kings over their Israelite subjects ...' (Olivier 1987: 3). In the process Omri would then solve any religious conflict, since Yahweh would be in Jezreel and Baal would be in Samaria. But, as Olivier (1987:6) quite rightly implies, that would have meant that Jehu should have retained Jezreel, and not Samaria, as he did (cf Jagersma 1979:139). Gray postulates Omri as possibly Canaanite, but finds it significant that Ahab ' ... named his children with Yahweh-theophorics' (1977:369).

Be that as it may be, Omri established his capitol and built to fortify it. His son Ahab proceeded

to enhance this city further by means of the craftmanship of his Phoenician allies, and to trade along the major routes. (I Ki: 20). There were also battles the Omrids had to fight, between themselves and the Arameans as well as the Assyrians.

There was also drought and famine in Samaria. The drought became the basis for a comparison between the powers of Baal and Yahweh. Elijah and Yahweh win the battle, and soon there is ' ... a sound of abundance of rain' (1 Ki 18:41). As this story identifies the consequences of the apostacy of Ahab and the inhabitants of Samaria, it is just as well to mention here that drought, and its sister famine, were no strangers to the people of the Ancient Near East. Neumann and Parpola (1987: 176-182) in a very interesting article on climatic changes graphically illustrate, by means of Assyrian and Babylonian textual evidence, exactly how often such calamities befell the peoples of those countries. By implication this also means the people of Palestine, since their climatic calamities probably mirrored those of their neighbours. The two authors stress that such misfortunes obviously impacted on the social and ecomomic wellbeing of the populace. Such adversity could enforce farmers to lose their land and enable the great landowners to enlarge their properties ' ...join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place ...' (Isa 5:8; cf Bright 1981:244,245; Jagersma 1979:139,140).

Ahab's death, whilst campaigning against the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead, ushers in a pattern whereby the sons, who are not cut from the same cloth as the father, allow rebellion and war to become the norm of the day. Moab regained her lost territory and the Arameans increased their war efforts. Being keen traders, the Arameans had always had their eyes on the main route of the *Via Maris*, which led through Megiddo, and closely passed Samaria as well as Jezreel.

Jehu, the son of Jehosaphat, the son of Nimshi, thus ascended the throne of Israel after slaying Joram, son of Ahab, and anyone remotely Omrid. He massacres the priests of Baal and all Baal worshippers. Yet, the golden calves remained in Dan and Bethel (2 Ki 10:17-29). Jehu too had to realize the realities of the kingdom he was governing!

Sadly the once proud possession of the Omrids, tainted by the blood of Jehu's gross purge, became the seat of rebellions, violence and death. Its geo-political characteristics had enabled

easy access of foreign powers into the kingdom (Gottwald 1985:346-348). Of importance too was the ineffectual capabilities of its successive kings to maintain their grip on the monarchy. All these factors combined to transform Samaria into an archaeological tell of turbulence, movement, changes and of people who were deported away from the city. These elements the Omrids probably never had in mind when they erected and beautified their city.

The Assyrians colonized Samaria with their own people and turned it into an administrative centre (2 Ki 17:5-6; cf Parrot 1957:36-43). Paul Emile Botta (1842) dug into the remains of Sargon's palace at Khorsabad and found inscriptions on its walls which confirms this siege, conquest, deportations and resettlements (Pritchard 1958:134-138).

Because Augustus, the first Roman emperor (27 BCE -14 CE), made him king of Palestine, Herod the Great renamed Samaria 'Sebaste' (the Greek for the latin 'Augustus') and built a temple there in commemoration of Augustus' patronage (Parrot 1957:72-91). The Arab name of Sebastiye exists until present time.

6.1 Excavations and discoveries
The first excavations were carried out on behalf of Harvard University by G A Reisner, 1908 to 1910. From 1931-1935 J W Crowfoot (K Kenyon) directed the site. Further excavations proceeded under the direction of J B Hennessy in 1967. In the process many controversies have arisen as to various aspects of the excavations done on the site (dating, stratigraphical layers, etcetera). But I have chosen to steer past these pitfalls and will go directly onto the main items on the menu, namely, the actuality of the Tell and the story it has to tell.

In her field work at Samaria, Kenyon had exposed a north-south section within which she identified eight building phases. The first six of these, Periods 1-11, she related to the time of the Omrids (Omri and Ahab), whilst Periods 111-V1 she designated from Jehu to the Assyrian destruction of 722 BCE. Her findings seemed logical, since that site was a 'first', and therefore had no previous occupations. But, though seemingly "virgin" ground, Samaria had had pre-Omrid occupations (Tappy 1992:15-53; cf Stager 1990:93-105; B Mazar 1992:122-123).

However, it is clear that Samaria was developed from scratch by Omri and his son,Ahab, into a major city. And here I must again mention that my intention is to highlight the occupational "grandeur" of this major city. Hence, as an aid to gaining insight into the stratigraphical and chronological data pertaining to the site, I recommend the extensive and thorough work done by Tappy (1992), since I do not aim to go into the minute details of pottery assemblages and their sequences, in order to describe structural remains.

Omri had designated Samaria as the capital of Israel but, as the owner of the land, had additional and a vested, personal, interest in the new city on the hilltop. We can thus expect to find a good measure of aggrandization, as well as the signs of the effort and wealth needed to erect such structures. At Samaria Omri had inaugurated a new concept, that of an independent royal quarter. This was something unusual for the royal cities of Palestine, and was probably based on foreign models: and such structures necessitated flat terrain rather than the rounded hilltop of the tell. (Kenyon 1960:260; 1971:74,82; cf Mazar 1990:408). Thus in order to attain a flat surface on which to build his palace, an artificial platform had to be constructed which were supported by retaining walls (see diagram 2a).

This initial building phase, ie Period 1, is attributed to Omri. To this first building exercise belongs the enclosure of the royal quarters by means of a 1,6 meter thick wall. It has been traced only in segments on the northern, western and southern sides, with a gate presumably having been located on the eastern side (this was the less steep of all the sides). These fragmentary stretches though are in finely dressed masonry with irregular bosses characteristic of Period 1 foundation work and its heavier walls. The stones are fitted with amazing exactitude, and the proverbial knife would have difficulty in sliding in effortlessly. The line of this wall traces all around until unfortunately traces of it disappeares into later quarries. Elsewhere within the enclosure, for Period 1, only foundations have survived. These though consist of massive stones a meter in length, on the same scale as those in the enclosure were. The building dubbed the House of Ivories (see diagram 2), seem to belong to P1. The fragments which constituted the palace complex suggest that it was related to the Syrian *bit-hilani* model: but in this case may also have been influenced and inspired by Canaanite- Phoenician architectural traditions (Mazar 1990:408; cf Kenyon 1960:260-262; 1971:80).

Since Omri had only a short spell at Samaria (6 years), it is safe to assume that Ahab's contribution to the site was probably a continuating one. The palace (south-western area) and the Ivory House would receive further embellishment, and new rooms and halls would be added. Fragmentary traces of a building near the southern side of the enclosure indicate that a number of buildings were probably erected so as to accommodate various necessities (quarters for officials, administration facilities, storage rooms, et cetera). Ahab's very successful reign could not have been based on a poor presentation!

A very principal addition, though, which Ahab contributed to Samaria, was the extension of the whole western side by 30 meters and the whole of the northern side by 15 meters. This was achieved by massive fills (mainly on the western side) and the erection of a 6 meter wide casemate wall, which not only retained the fill, but obviously served as a defence mechanism as well. The extention on the western side became the site of an administrative complex which contained, amongst other, elongated storerooms. This structure became known as the "Ostraca Building" (see diagram 2), due to the sixty-three pieces of ostraca (recording oil and wine transactions) which were found there.

On the southern side the new wall was built against the existing one. It is unknown how the eastern wall was widened or altered? However, though this area has not yielded much to further our knowledge of the period in question, six *Proto-Ionic* capitals (cf diagram 2b) have been found there. They probably topped columns which were at the gate entrance. This whole enterprise of a new casemate wall thus effectively turned the royal quarters into a royal acropolis (Mazar 1990:409; cf Kenyon 1960:262-263; 1971:80-82).

As can be discerned the 'evidence' (though fragmentary), which was excavated, project a realization of the immense building program the Omrids set in motion (note the site extensions!). But the short supply of really massive structures (as found at Jezreel) is amply compensated for by the extraordinary building craftmanship which came to light, and by the caches of beautifully worked ivory pieces were found in the Ivory House (see illustration 6).

The ivories found at Samaria find echo in 1 Ki 22:39 in 'the ivory house he (Ahab) made' Most

of the pieces were found in the debris of the Assyrian destruction. The small fragments were suitable for adorning furniture or friezes on a wall. The influences of the Phoenicians are very obvious. Their motiffs, such as lions, flowers, cherubim and 'the woman in the window', are indicative of the wide travels of the Phoenicians (Egypt, Asia). As ivory was an expensive material to acquire, we can assume that the Omrids had not only the wealth to buy this costly way of decoration, but they also had appreciation of the artistically finished work (Kenyon 1971:83-89; Beach 1993:94-104; Shanks 1985:40-53).

The extensive use of ashlar construction at Samaria was due to the close relationship between Israel and Phoenicia. The Phoenicians were the experts of the day in the technique of this particularly beautiful way of stone dressing (squared and smoothed). Ashlar buildings were dry-built and the stones were fitted without mortar. The usual pattern of stone laying was the header and stretcher construction (see illustration 10a). Thus the long (stretcher) and the short (header) sides of the stones would be laid in alternate fashion. This pattern could vary, with maybe two headers and one stretcher, et cetera. Buildings would be built on the outside as well as the inside with ashlar construction. (Barkay 1992:315-316).

It is by way of these discoveries that we realize that the Omrids were more than mediocre kings, and that their kingships were based on power, wealth, determination and ability. I shall therefore now proceed to utilize these findings and see whether they can, by way of their archaeological presence, bring about an archaeological persuasion as to the achievements and grandeur of the Omrids at Samaria.

Occupation history of Samaria

Stratum	Date	Discoveries
	Pre-monarchic 1000-950 BCE	Concentration of pits carved out of the natural rock. Wine and olive presses found in those rock cuttings. Further north more presses found. Flimsy walls found were probably part of Shemers' estate, dating at least from Iron I. Four bell-shaped pits found (storage for grain?).
	Founding of Royal city 880 / 879 BCE?	

(I - II) early 3	Divided Monarchy 880 - 241 BCE	Buildings on summit supported by retaining (casemate)walls and fill on northern and western side (Limited space as well as Samarias' being a 'gentle' hill). Walls dressed to a flat surface. Phoenician bossed masonry on outer walls. ' Ivory' house structure and carved ivory pieces. Structural remains of palaces and administrative buildings(scanty).
(III)	Divided Monarchy 841 - 815 BCE	Structures mark distinct break. Style of masonry with roughly coursed blocks, possibly due to the break with Phoenicia. Rooms added to north of ivory house. Different masonry techniques visible of Period III wall built upon Period I wall.
(IV) 4a - 4	Divided Monarchy 815 - 765 BCE	Irregular and shoddily planned rooms built up against northern casemate wall, as an addition to main building. Ostraca building possibly of this period. Pieces of ostraca which denote transactions of various kinds.
(IVa) 5 - 6	Divided Monarchy 765 - 732 BCE	
(V) 6	Divided Monarchy 732 - 722 / 721BCE	
	Destruction 720 BCE	
(VI) 7 (VII)	Assyrian Occupation 721 - 700 BCE Assyrian Occupation 700 - 650 BCE	Royal quarter destroyed. Ivories blackened by fire. Casemate walls around summit survived.

(Kenyon 1971:71-94; cf Tappy 1992:253)

6.2 Archaeological persuasions

In order to produce an effective archaeological persuasion, all the elements must be called forward, so as to form a cohesive part of the whole. All these elements have already been introduced, whilst their acting parts have been described and fully detailed. Without them we cannot continue the show.

Context:the part played by the geographical context, whether of the whole of Palestine or just the Tell itself, is crucial to the eventual development of the city built at that specific tell. Prosperity and economic viability depended on the city's trade connections and its distance from busy routes. Peace and security depended on its defensive position, and on the assailability of its walls and gates. Food and sustenance depended on the availability of farming lands and the yield or lack of its crops. The people of the city, their immediate geographical neighbours, their far-off geographical neighbours, their eternal enemies, their friends, political allies, temporary allies, all played apart. (Thus the Samarian ivories and Phoenician workmanship were possible because of several of the above mentioned factors, ie trade routes, peace and stability). All of these roles are played by 'setting', and if we apply them to Samaria, we find that our archaeological discoveries reflect their influence.

Sources:which are elements of a different calibre than those of contexts. These are necessary due to the fact that without sources we have nothing. A tiny piece of evidential matter can often tell enough to be able to bring understanding, eg the ivory piece of 'the woman in the window' (see illustration 6) tells of the material, the craftmanship, the foreign influence, the wealth to buy the item, the source of the wealth, etcetera. And if we apply the tiny pieces of ivory to Samaria we find that our archaeological discoveries reflect 'sources' influence.

Omrid context:these are players who are not only the result of the roles played by context and sources, but are also the manufacturers of the evidences! Very complex roleplayers indeed. And that is why they are probably the most cohesive factor of all, because an understanding of context and sources will, in effect, make them understandable as manufacturers of archaeological discoveries. Samaria's site speaks volumes of its trade policies with the Phoenicians, its use of its artisans, its wealth, its obvious realisation of the potential danger across their borders, and its preparedness of possible invasions. If we apply the palace, casemate walls, adornment of buildings, labour involved and the great costs applicable in the erection of the platform for the extension of the site of Samaria, we find our archaeological discoveries reflecting'Omrid context' influence.

Our archaeological persuasions means that we can thus assign to the Omrids the glory of the

Capital on the (flattened) hill(see illustration 9), with all of its incredible and immense building program. The mind boggles at the thought of the erection of that stupendous platform, in order to have the tell enlarged. Considering the need modern man has to use enormous bulldozers and earthshifting equipment just to move a few cubic meters of soil from one part of the building site to another, we can only feebly try to imagine the backbreaking labor, and the large bulk of fill involved, when that site was enlarged. And since the floors between the new and the old wall rested only on fill, it was very necessary to compact the fill to a density which would carry the floors. A great effort in manpower, which brings the following to mind. Who did the work?

We read of Rehoboam's response (1 Ki 12:4, 13,14) to the people when asked to lighten the yoke his father, Solomon, had placed on them. We get a taste here of the obligation the people had to serve the king (corvee). But, as Na'aman (1997:122-124) reckons, that is exactly why the schism occured in the first place, since it also indicates the limitations of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, to enforce hard labour. Therefore the labor force , used at Samaria and Jezreel (especially) would have been composed mainly of prisoners of war. This statement is based on the fact that the Omrids conducted offensive wars on the eastern and northern fronts. He also quotes the lines from the Moab Stone where Mesha boasts of using prisoners of Israel to dig ditches, an exercise which could apply to other conquerors' (Israel's) treatment of prisoners!

However, a different approach is applied by Deist & le Roux (1987:76-82) in which they see a vicious reaction setting in when the people (not prisoners) were exploited into these huge building projects. The artisans, workers, administrators and officers on these building sites were mostly foreigners (many of them Phoenicians), and in time these people would demand certain civil rights, which meant that the power lay with them , whilst the civilians had their rights infringed on. This situation worsened during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, when people started to flock to the cities. The main reason for this being the unavailability of ground to farm, due to the practice of inheritance and subdivision. People then, as now, sought a living in the city. And we all know the consequenses of such a living, namely, exploitation, no income and hardship.

Thus , despite the magnificence and the grandeur which we can detect at Samaria, we have to

admit that there was also another side to the story (but that is for someone else to investigate, since I am trying to portray the achievements of the Omrids, and not their sins!)

Now we have to go and visit the other city of Omrid fame. This city was totally different to Samaria, since it had a short lifespan, and was the scene of terrible manslaughter and carnage.

CHAPTER 7

7 JEZREEL — NEMESIS OF THE OMRIDS

When people are asked to define 'Jezreel', most can respond with a macabre memory of Jezreel as the place where a wicked woman, named Jezebel, met a horrible but well deserved death, and where 'only her head? or her feet? or nothing?' was left? So much for 2 Ki 9:30-37 with its prophecy that Jezebel shall be no more!

But, considering abovementioned punishment, we also realize that Jehu's coup most certainly resulted in the perpetration of many acts of bloody violence in the city of Jezreel: the death of King Joram (Ahab's son), the extermination of Ahab's kin and the arrival of the severed heads, from Samaria, of Ahab's seventy sons at the gates of Jezreel (1 Ki 9:15; 2 Ki 10:1-8, 11). And so we contemplate 'the blood of Jezreel' in Hosea 1:4, and Yahweh's avenging of these cruel deeds of the House of Jehu. In the process the city of Jezreel also vanished, only to be 'refound' in the 20 th century CE.

Due to the discoveries made there, it has become obvious that Jezreel was a great city and that it is a puzzle as to why such greatness faded into insignificance. Because just as Samaria was geographically positioned to dominate, so Jezreel, as part of the 'triangle', could also aspire to a continuing existence after the demise of the House of Omri. She certainly had the 'necessary characteristics', and as excavations have shown, was strongly fortified and of immense size.

In my description of Samaria's geographical position I had, of necessity, to mention Jezreel too, in order to place the two royal cities in their mutual perspectives. It will thus be excessive to rewrite all that information again. Therefore, to recap briefly, Jezreel formed part of a geographical triangle with Samaria and Megiddo. Because of its very strategic position within the tribal territory of Issachar (Jos 19:17-23), a theory had developed which assigned Jezreel the role of Omri's 'Israelite' capital. Reaction though differ on that opinion whilst recent excavations have indicated that Jezreel might rather have been a military base. Further observations on this phenomena will be made when I deal with the chapter on excavations.

Jezreel came to prominence because it served as a royal city for the duration of the Omrid dynasty. Its demise, at the hands of Jehu (841 BCE), brought to an end its brief, forty year span of glory. But this short period, nevertheless, was crammed with people and events. Because this short period was the highpoint of the city's existence, and of concern to the Omrid context, a brief indication only, of wellknown events which took place there before the tell's occupation by the Omrids, will be given. First there is the story of the slaying of Saul and his sons at Mt Gilboa (1 Sam31:1-4). Then there is the confrontation between the Philistines and the Israelites (1 Sam 29:1,11). Here too Ishbosheth, son of Saul, was made king (2 Sam 2:8,9), and in Joshua 19:18 we read that here the lots of Issachar were ordained, whilst in Judges 7:1 we read that Gideon mustered his men at the fountain of Harod (cf Pienaar 1990:67,68).

Hence we perceive that this area had been, from the earliest times, a place of 'military - confrontation', an area where battles were fought and kings were slain. Thus when we come to the time of the Omrids, we find that they occupy a site which had seen strife and violence. This is not surprising, since Jezreel was located in a very fertile valley, close to main trade routes and close to Megiddo (and Samaria). The city was thus built to serve a variety of factors. These 'variety of factors' have received their share of attention. Some of the results are that:

1) The city served as a winter palace (Montgomery & Gehman 1960:330)

2) It was the ancestral home of the Omrids (Gray 1977:439)

3) It was the second capitol (Israelite) of the Omrids (Alt 1959:260 ff)

4) It was a (military) bulwark against Aramean infringement (Olivier 1987:15).

(The above short summary is taken from Pienaar 1990:68, in which he advocates Oliviers' 'military'designation as probable).

Taking the geographical position of Jezreel into account, we can understand the Omrids' occupation of this tell with its potentially lucrative characteristics (arable land, food production, trade and commerce). But exactly for those same reasons they would have needed to ensure safety measures, and thus the erection of structures and fortifications. Which is why, when coming to the time of Jehu's coup and elimination of the Omrids, one asks :'why did Jehu fail to see the city in this way? Surely he could have made good use of such a strong bastion?'

In 2 Kings 9: 1-37 we read of the extermination of Ahab's House, Jezebel's death and the killing of the king, Joram at the city of Jezreel. By implication we can take it that those deeds left a powerful 'aura of the destruction of the house of Ahab (Omri)'. Therefore the end of Jezreel also portrayed the end of the rule of the hated Omrids. Hence the desolation which the tell fell into (Gray 1977:439). However, Na'aman (1997:125-127) argues that the most likely candidates for the destruction of Jezreel was Hazael of Damascus (the one of the tell Dan inscription) and his Aramean soldiers. Jehu is thus obliged to step aside in this matter. But then, what about the biblical text of Hosea 1:4 which declares the very valid fall of the House of Jehu because of the excessive bloodletting at Jezreel? Then, of course, there was the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser 111. Jehu ascended the throne in 841 BCE, the same year that this Assyrian monarch exacted tribute from Jehu (Black Obelisk). Can one speculate that it could have been Shalmaneser who took possession of the contents of the city (food, chariots, horses etcetera), and then forbade Jehu the use of such a strongly fortified city? Jezreel would thus lose all pretentions to being a defensive military base, and its strength as a rallying point would have been severely curtailed.

Be that as it may, we shall now go to the site, to see what results we can find regarding the function of the city. Let us see what the excavations have produced and what they can tell us. The handling of the excavations done at Jezreel is going to differ from that of Samaria, since this site has been under the directorship of the same directors for the whole period of excavation. And as their work only started in 1990, it makes Jezreel a 'young' site, and one which has not been overly exposed to conflicting and disagreeing viewpoints. A different approach is needed in order to explore the archaeological discoveries made there.

7.1 Excavations and discoveries

In the concluding lines of his article on 'Jezreel in the Biblical Texts', Williamson (1991:89)advises that ' ... so far as the time of Ahab is concerned the site should be excavated with a completely open mind as ... (*to whatever is*) .... to be found there or not. Probably sound advice in lieu of the fact that bulldozer operations had, in 1987, revealed the remains of ancient structures which seemed similar to those found at Samaria and the other cities of the Omrid

period. It was deemed important to further investigate the site (but to keep the Omrids at a discreet distance!) However it was only in 1990 that the first systematic excavations took place. This was a joint expedition by the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University and the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. The directors for these expeditions were David Ussishkin (Tel Aviv) and John Woodhead (Jerusalem). The results of their work, done in the four seasons of 1990-1991, and 1992-1993, were published in preliminary reports in 1992 and 1994 respectively (here-after designated as PR 1 and PR 2). The results of the fifth season, ie 1995, did not produce such dramatic finds so as to affect the discoveries made during the previous period of 1990-1993 (Williamson 1996:41).

Because two corners of the site had already been exposed (via the bulldozer), the excavators had decided to start digging in those two specific 'known' areas (a case of having found it, why look for it!). In order to orientate ourselves to the site, it is necessary to consult diagram 3. This figure shows the roughly rectangular (150 x 300 m) shape of the tell, with its sides actually orientated north-north-east, east-south-east et cetera (an invitation to contorted distinctions of directions). So, very sensibly, it was decided to orientate them to the north, east, et cetera (PR 2, 1). This simplification thus allows one to state that the site had a steepish slope along its northern side, whilst the other three sides did not have this advantage (a state of affairs which determined the eventual fortification pattern of the city).

Thus the towers could be positioned as area B (south-east corner), whilst the one in the north-east corner became known as area D. These towers inspired Ussishkin to assume that the corner structures probably extended along the southern and northern sides. Therefore trenches were opened up in each side and labelled area A (south) and area C (north). As an incentive towards gaining some idea of the settlement pattern in the western part of the site, a probe trench was dug in area E. Another trench, area F, was dug to the west of and parallel to area A. Its northern edge touched upon the higher, central part of the site, whilst its southern edge reached the periphery of the site. This trench was needed to find out whether the southern fortifications turned north at that point, or whether it continued along the southern side to the western corner. In order to form a cross section (south to north) of the site, area G was opened up, as a sort of continuation of the trench in area C (northern side), and running towards area A (southern

side). As a further aid, towards an understanding of the moats' size and depth, trenches (no's 1-6) were dug along the southern side in a clockwise order, from area A towards the western corner. Once there, trenches (no's 7-10) were then cut along the western side (PR 1,13-53; PR 2, 3-46).

I have mentioned these areas since each one had been chosen for a specific reason. And these reasons magically turned into archaeological discoveries, of a style and scale of fortifications of a sort unparalled in Iron Age Palestine (Williamson 1996:41).

A descriptive list of the excavation results now follows for Areas A to G
Area A: supervision: J Woodhead (1990), P Croft, O Zimhonie (1991),

        D Oredsson, O Zimhonie (1992, 1993).

The cut into the southern edge of the site revealed a fortification system composed of the following, namely, a rock-cut moat, 12 meters wide and 5 to 6 meters deep. Within the moat was a revetment wall, 2 meters wide, and which extended above and along the upper edge of the moat's inner wall. This revetment wall also served as a retaining edge for the horizontal expanse of rampart, which spanned 17 meters across to meet the casemate wall at the top of the mound. The rampart core was composed of soil and pebbles, and had a superimposed and well compacted layer of pebbles. This wide expanse of rampart towered over the moat with a total height of 11 meters, from the top of the rampart to the bottom of the moat. At the top was the 5 meter wide casemate wall, composed of an inner and outer wall. These walls had a distance of 2 meters between them, and were each 1,5 meters wide. The walls were constructed of boulders, with smaller stones as fillers. The space between the walls are filled with the same type of soil as those used in the ramparts. If the widths of the 5 meter wall, the 17 meter rampart and the 12 meter moat is added up, an impressive total of 34 meters is reached!

As the other areas would show, this type of moat had surrounded the site on three sides, south, east and west. The eastern sides' exposure, by the obliging bulldozers, have shown that in the northern part of the rock-cut moat it varied from 8 - 12 meters, and also that there was no revetment wall here. The northern side of the site revealed no moat and rampart, probably because of its degree of steepness, which made it a fortification in itself.

Because of a large topographical depression, situated immediately to the west of area A, excavations were done here in anticipation of finding the gatehouse. On the eastern side of the depression a monumental structure, associated with the casemate wall, was found. Also found within the confines of the structure was a 'room', 5,5 x 1,25 meters, which was plastered and apparently held water. On the western side of the depression, excavations revealed the gatehouse, which consisted of 4 chambers and 6 piers. The gate complex was unfortunately badly robbed and damaged. Despite this setback Woodhead (1997) in the 1996 season produced some evidence to postulate that the gate was actually 6 chambered, and also the largest of that type found to date. In this context the water-holding plastered room becomes obvious when its useful proximity to the gatehouse is taken into account.

Based on a measurement exercise of all the walls, piers and passage , Ussishkin calculated that the gatehouse's size was c 17,5 x 14,5 meters. This makes it the largest of that type of gate found to date. It was also found that though the moat extended continuously along the side, the ramp did not extend in front of the gatehouse. Instead there was a flat surface (piazza) between the moat (which narrows to 8 meters here) and the gate. The roadway must thus have crossed over the moat. This bridging of the moat is still to be established (all data on area A, cf PR1, 14-23; PR2, 3-25; Woodhead 1997; Williamson 1996:41,42).

Area B: supervision: G Barkay (1990), J Hadley (1991), G Barkay (1992).

As well as being one of the two areas (north-east and south-east) which became the incentive for further excavations, the tower in area B also served as identification of a tower in the north-western corner, and of the possible existence of a tower in the south-western corner. The tower was built according to a basic plan, which consisted of three rooms, a long rectangular unit in the central row, and (at least) one side row containing three small rooms, which all added up to a size of 15 square meters. The walls were founded on bedrock, with their substructure built of stone, whilst their superstructure consisted of bricks. The towers' adjoining casemate walls have the same size as the casemates along the sites' edges, ie 1,5 meters wide, and 2 meters between walls. This tower projects from both sides of the corner, thus creating an almost perfect abutting 'square'. Of interest is the evidence of destruction found in this tower. Debris, burnt remains and smashed pottery lay in layers within the rooms, especially the rectangular one

in the centre. This is one of the few areas which show evidence of fire and destruction (all data on area B, cf PR1 23-31, PR2, 25-28; Woodhead 1997).

Area D: supervision: Y Dagan (1990) (1991), P Croft (1992).

Being the other half of the two areas which sparked off the incentive to excavate further, the tower in area D also became a foil to interpretation of the possible towers in the north- western and south-western corners. The layout of the rooms within the tower is similar to that of area B, with an overall size of 15 x 15 metres. The walls were founded on bedrock, but the foundations of this tower were more massive than those in area B, their depth being c 6 meters high. The adjoining casemate walls on the eastern side are, as in area B, 1,5 meters wide. But, the outer wall on the northern side is 1,75 meters thick, as is also the outer walls of the tower itself. Within two rooms of the eastern casemate wall, and adjacent to the tower, much pottery was discovered, which seems to have fallen from a higher floor into the open space below. This may have been due to destruction or they may havebeen dumped there at a later stage. Zimhoni (1992:57,69) finds significance in the fact that they seem to have originated from nearby and that they form part of a single repertoire (all data on area D, cf to PR1,35-42; PR2, 29-31; cf Woodhead 1997; Williamson 1996:41,42).

Area C: supervision:O Zimhoni (1990) Excavations ended in the first season.

The northern side of the Tel Jezreel differed from the other three sides due to its relative steepness. Excavations in area C showed no Iron Age ramparts, but the remains of a stone wall, built on bedrock and preserved to a height of c 2 courses, was found. Also found were Iron Age structural remains, which may have been part of the enclosures' northern casemate wall. Further excavations would clarify this side of the site (PR1, 31-35).

Area G: supervision:D Oredsson (1993).

This area is an extension of area C and area A, and therefore constitutes a north to south cross section of the site. Some Iron Age remains were uncovered in the northern part of area G . Similar remains are expected to be found in the southern part of area G. Flimsy remains , such as floors and walls, were also excavated in area G, and they represent Iron Age habitation, since they were built directly onto the brown soil. This brown soil was brought from outside Jezreel,

to be used as construction fill for the Iron Age enclosure. However, natural soil seems to have been used as well, since there is evidence of this in the northern part of area G (PR2, 42).

Area E: supervision:P Davies (1990), A Grey (1991,1993).

The area was to be investigated to locate the sort of habitation (houses, palace?) which took place here. However, much time (3 seasons) was spent in clearing the medieval church which is located in area E. This church is situated to the north-west of the Ottoman tower, which was built on the highest point of the site.

In 1993 the line of the rock-cut moat was established, and so too the fact that the central part of the church rested on the debris fills of the moat. A probe trench was located inside the moat on the northern side of the church. Thus any finds located here, would originate from the fills of the moat. The probe trench revealed Roman pottery and the remains of a building, probably of the Byzantine period (PR2, 31-32). Further excavations is needed for more clarity. I have omitted to give an account of the findings at the church since it does not pertain to this dissertation.

Area F: supervision: O Zimhoni (1991), Y Dagan (1992), I Hoad (1992,1993).

This area runs from north to south (parallel to area A) and perpendicular to the southern side of the site. Excavations, in the southern part of area F, produced only some boulders. Digging below these boulders though, the excavators found the mouth of a deep, rock-cut cistern. The bottom of a stone trough was found next to the cistern, A wall crosses here from east to west, and is well built, with ashlars set in header and stretcher fashion, which gives it a probable Iron Age dating. The purpose of this area was to determine whether the southern edge fortifications turned at this point to reach the higher, central part of the Tell. However, no significant walls, which would indicate such a swerve off to the north, have been located. The site thus retains a rectangular shape (unless new discoveries necessitate a revision of this statement). A very interesting discovery, though, was made in area F. A fragment of a stone carved 'incence' bowl, common to Syria in the earlier part of the first millenium BCE, was found. These bowls were ladle shaped and were connected to a perforated neck, so as to ease the flow of liquids. Their exact use is not clear though they seem to have been cultic objects (PR1, 47; PR2, 37-42).

The discoveries have now been listed and described. In order to evaluate Tell Jezreel and its builders, these discoveries must be scrutinized, put into conjunction with, and be compared to all role-playing factors, so as to enable an archaeological persuasion to have taken place. Hopefully these archaeological persuasions will then become Omrid achievements.

Occupation History of Jezreel

Date	Discoveries
Early Bronze 3300 - 2300 BCE Middle Bronze 2300 - 1550 BCE Late Bronze 1550 - 1200 BCE	At Jezreel the levels all merged one into the other. Few remains but signs of substantial settlements. Next to no destruction occurred, which meant that building just replaced older ones.
Iron Age 1200 - 1000 BCE United Monarchy 1000 - 920 BCE	Little evidence uncovered.
Divided Monarchy 880 - 841 BCE	Casemate walls, rampart, moat on eastern and southern sides. Revetment wall on south side. Towers in northeast corner and in southeast corner. This tower has evidence of destruction. Gate structure (very incomplete) with four chambers (could be six). Gatehouse may have been flanked by towers. Structure in gate area which may be water 'tank'
Byzantine period	Large town on site. Structures built inside moat. Walls follow Iron Age orientation.
Crusader Period 1100 - 1300 CE	Church remains and burials.

(Woodhead 1997:1,2; cf Mazar 1990:vi-ix)

7.2 Archaeological persuasions

I have already mentioned, in my ' Archaeological persuasions' of Samaria, the great importance of the geographical **context**, the geographical neighbours, the applied **sources**, and the realities and **context** of the world in which the Omrids lived. Just as all these factors, in combination with archaeological persuasions such as structures, produced the results at Samaria, so these same elements of setting, sources and context, will contribute to an understanding of the 'history' of Tell Jezreel.

When we read the texts which relate the Omrids' connection to Jezreel (see sub section 7.1), we generally believe that it must have been an important place, why else mention it! Therefore, when an Iron Age defense system rises from the 'ashes of the dead' at Jezreel, it would be natural to assume that this is the work of Omri or Ahab. On the other hand, such immense types of fortifications were not unknown in Palestine or her surrounds. The enclosure, north of Tell Hazor, had a huge earthen rampart and a very deep moat (Yadin 1975:29-34). Lachish had an outer wall at the middle of the mound, with an inner, 6 meter wide wall at the top, and in between was a very impressive rampart (Mazar 1990:427,428). Recent excavations at Tell El 'Umeiri, Jordan, have produced an almost identical Iron Age defense system such as the one at Jezreel (Clark1994:138-147). So, what makes Jezreel so special?

Recent argumentations about 'King Solomon' and 'the missing 10 th century' (Millard 1991:19-27; Maxwell Miller 1991:28-31; Finkelstein 1996:177-186; Mazar 1997; 157-166), and the discoveries of sources in which the 'house of Omri' figures prominently (Assyria), have sparked off a new assessment of the Omrid clan. Thus, when these monumental structures came to light, the quest came into being for an adventure into the realm of these previously belittled kings of Israel. Taking the immense work involved in the extensions at Samaria into account, it becomes very easy to attribute to the house of Omri the massive fortification at Jezreel. And when we consolidate the findings at Jezreel with the role actors in the game, it becomes difficult not to say 'yes, they were magnificent kings, just look what they achieved'. The only problem is how to define the city. Was it for retreat, defense or propaganda?

A very interesting article was written by Kochavi (1999:44-50), in which he analysis the whole controversy about 'Divided-tripartite structures', namely, stables-cum-storerooms-cum soldiers barracks. The whole 'stables' affair is derived from the biblical reference to Solomon's cities for chariots and cities for horsemen (1 Ki 9:19). Kochavi proposes that these storerooms were actually ancient shopping malls. A very convincing argument, which bases this theory on trade routes, building peculiarities (windows/no windows) and the presence of the quantities of pottery found in the storerooms. This theory, if fruitful, will replace the storeroom theory which had replaced the stables theory (more or less). However, one then has to wonder where were the horses stabled and where were the chariots kept.

In another very interesting article, Berlyn (1994:151-162) has written about Ahab and his confrontation with Ben-Hadad, the Aramean. Ben Hadad '... gathered all his host ... and horses and chariots ... made war ...' (1 Ki 20:1). But, he loses the battle against Ahab, and on going to his advisors, was told bluntly ' ... you lost , horse for horse and chariot for chariot ...'(20:25). Now, her argument takes her to the battle of Qarqar, since it is there that Ahab (with 2000 chariots) then deploys all of Ben-hadad's previous losses, to hoot, his chariots and horses! Which seems to make sense, exept, where did Ahab keep all these horses ?

And that is where the huge fortifications, the flat (mustering) areas and the strong towers appear to supply a solution (cf the viewpoint of Aharoni & Avi-Jonah, 1968:30, when they compare the Hyksos and the fortification of some of their cities, *as where they probably kept chariots and horses).* Surely Jezreel would be an ideal place for the safe keeping of such precious commodities as horses and chariots? Not only would they be at hand should an enemy or invading army appear from the north (Aram, Assyria), they could also be utilized to patrol that very desirable valley. The biblical accounts of Jezreel seem to indicate that that is where either Ahab or Joram were always heading to in their chariots. Therefore, considering all the options, it appears that Jezreel was the city which was the watchdog, the safe haven, the reservoire of immediate preparedness, the one with the power and the one who sheltered her king. And as such she deserves the title of achievement and grandeur.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8 CONCLUSION

This is always the most difficult part of any story, essay, report, and so forth, since one feels that the work has been done, and that it is time to down the pen. However, there is a future ahead of us in which many things, such as new archaeological artifacts shall be found. These discoveries could disenchant us to the extent that we have to proclaim the present structural remains to be the achievement of other kings rather than those of the Omrids. But that would only put them on the same footing as their counterparts, David and Solomon. The only extra-Biblical source we have on these two exalted kings is the Tell Dan Aramaic Inscription, which mentions the 'house of David'. The Omrids can boast more than that. But, maybe we shall be enchanted by means of discoveries which can either compare with the present structures we have, as per the immense fortifications at Jezreel, or maybe even better than that.

Either way is a way to discover the 'historical' kingdom of Israel of the ninth century. But for now, it is very heartening to see how far archaeologists have come since the days of 'conditioned' archaeology. Nowadays archaeologists ask questions about the social, economical, religious and political structures of ancient Palestine, since their realizations are about the realities of those long gone ages. However, as I said in the beginning of this dissertation, it is not always easy to go back into time, since *our* realities appear when we want the realities *of long dead kings* and their realms to appear. It is really only through a combination of archaeology, extra-Biblical sources, open-minded reading of texts, and a healthy dose of imagination that it is possible to discern the figures of Omri and Ahab and the world they lived in.

As a last thought, would it not be absolutely wonderful if the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, and the Chronicles of the kings of Judah were discovered? Then we can, maybe, forever lay to rest most of the uncertainties with which we are still plagued.

9 MAPS, DIAGRAMS AND ILLUSTRATIONS   PAGE

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mazar, A 1990. *Archaeology of the land of the Bible. 10000-586 BCE.* New York: Doubleday.
Diagram   2   p407
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ditto   8a   pl58
ditto   8b   pl50

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Diagram   3a   p17
Illustration   15a   p18
ditto   15b   p21

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Diagram   3   p4
ditto   3b   p7

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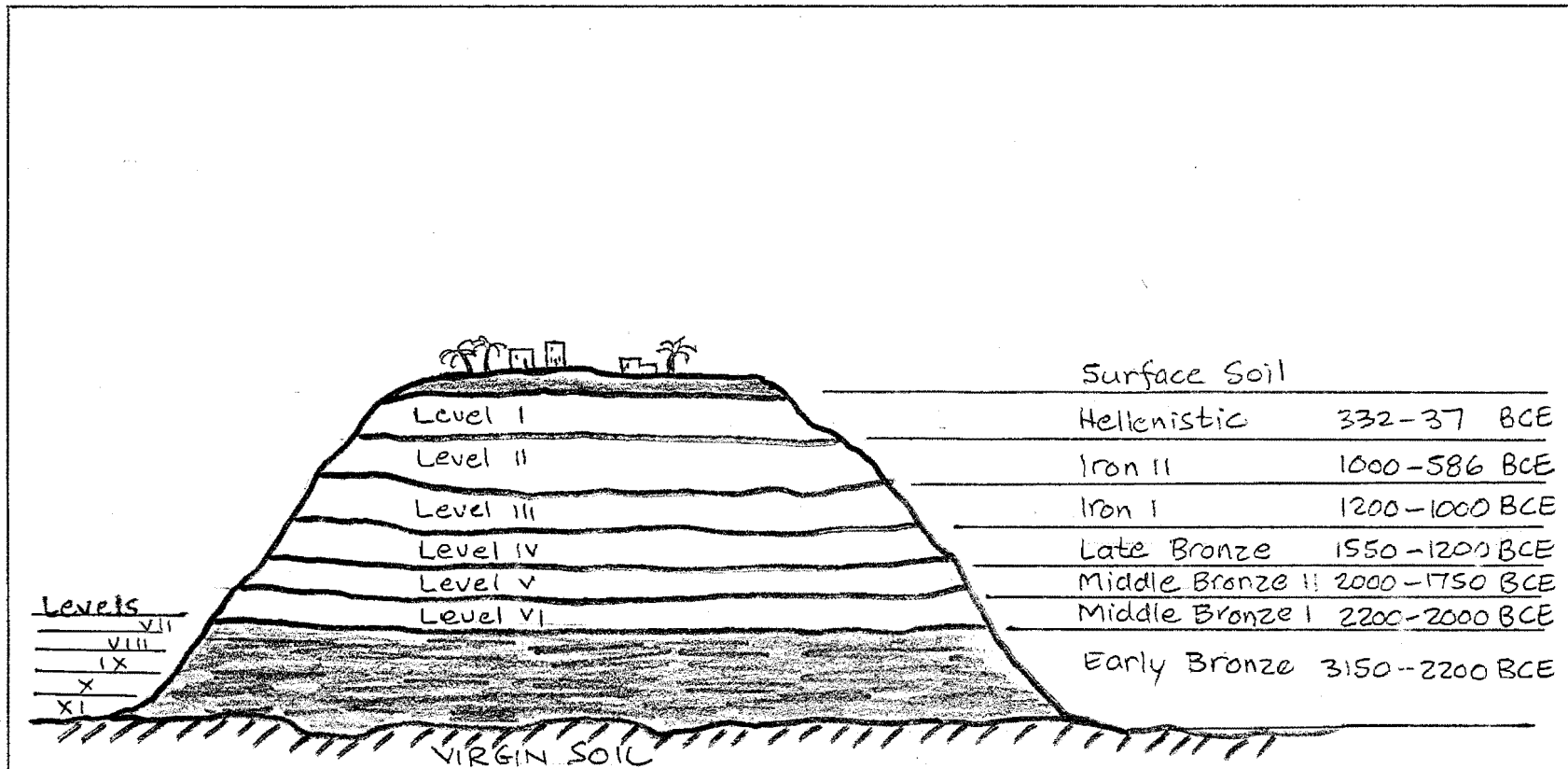Illustration   12a   p169
ditto   12b   p158

N

CYPRUS

Mediterranean Sea

SYRIA

ASSYRIA

MESOPOTAMIA

River Tigris

River Euphrates

PALESTINE

EGYPT

ARABIAN DESERT

River Nile

Map 1: THE FERTILE CRESCENT

Map 2: THE LAND OF PALESTINE

Levels
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

Level I
Level II
Level III
Level IV
Level V
Level VI

Surface Soil
Hellenistic   332 – 37   BCE
Iron II   1000 – 586 BCE
Iron I   1200 – 1000 BCE
Late Bronze   1550 – 1200 BCE
Middle Bronze II   2000 – 1750 BCE
Middle Bronze I   2200 – 2000 BCE
Early Bronze   3150 – 2200 BCE

VIRGIN SOIL

Diagram 1: THE TELL (Accumulated layers of debris)
numbered in Roman numerals
from top to bottom
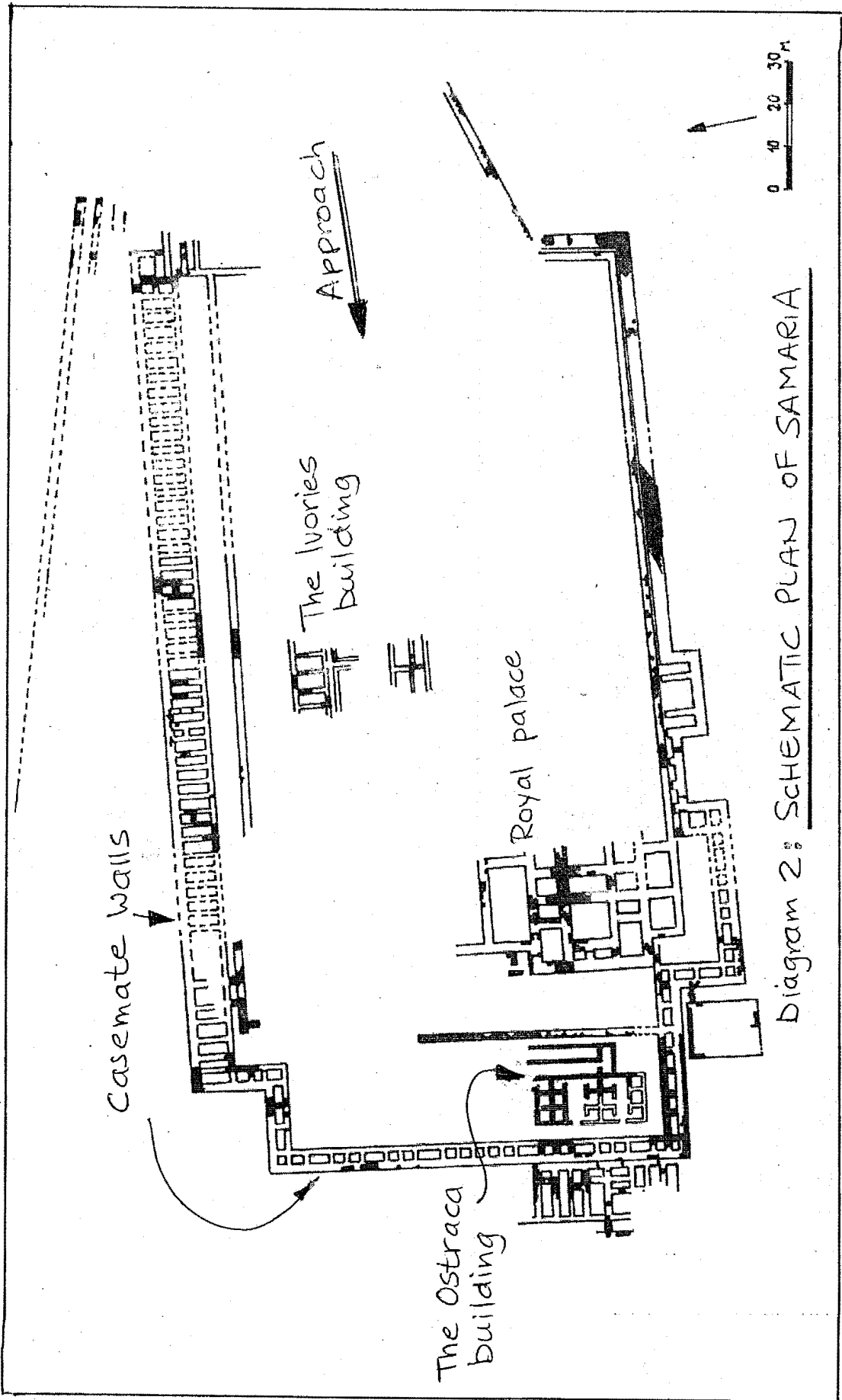
Diagram 2: SCHEMATIC PLAN OF SAMARIA

Casemate Walls

The Ostraca building

The Ivories building

Approach

Royal palace

0 10 20 30 m

30 m Western side
15 m Northern side

Fill between two walls

Ahab's new casemate wall

Omri's wall
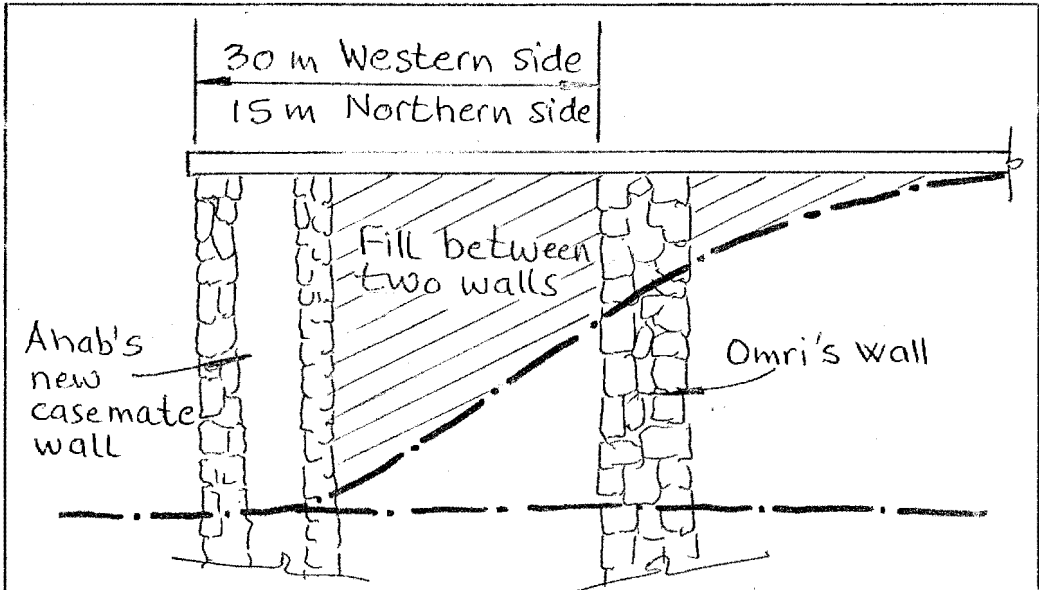
Diagram 2a: SECTION A-A (NTS)
(Schematic)
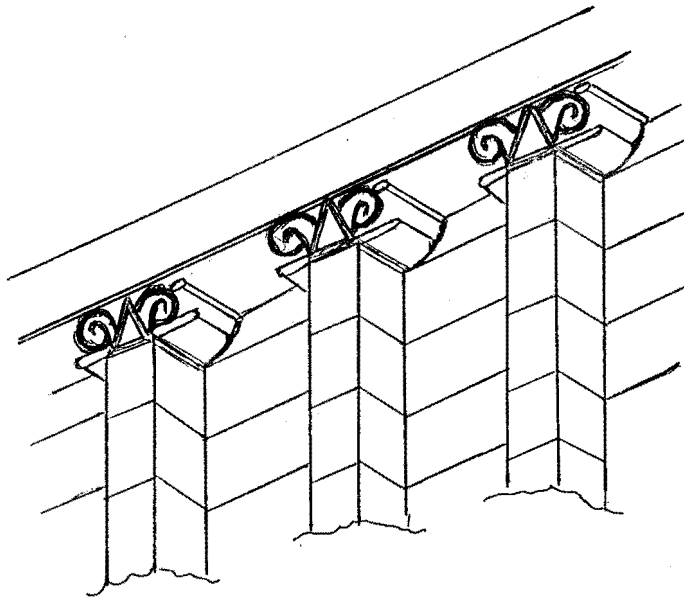
Diagram 2b: PROTO-IONIC PILASTERS

G Possible Tower

Area **C**   Area **D**

N

Area **E**

CHURCH

Bedrock

Area **G**

Casemate
Walls

TOWER

Trenches 7 to 10

Moat

Area **F**   Bedrock

Possible Tower

Area **A**   X

MOAT

Moat

Area **B**

MOAT

Trenches 6   4   3   2   1   11   X

See diagram3b
for enlarged
details

Diagram **3**:   SCHEMATIC PLAN OF JEZREEL (NTS)

Revetment wall

Casemate wall

11 m

Moat

Rampart

2 m

12 m

17 m

5 m
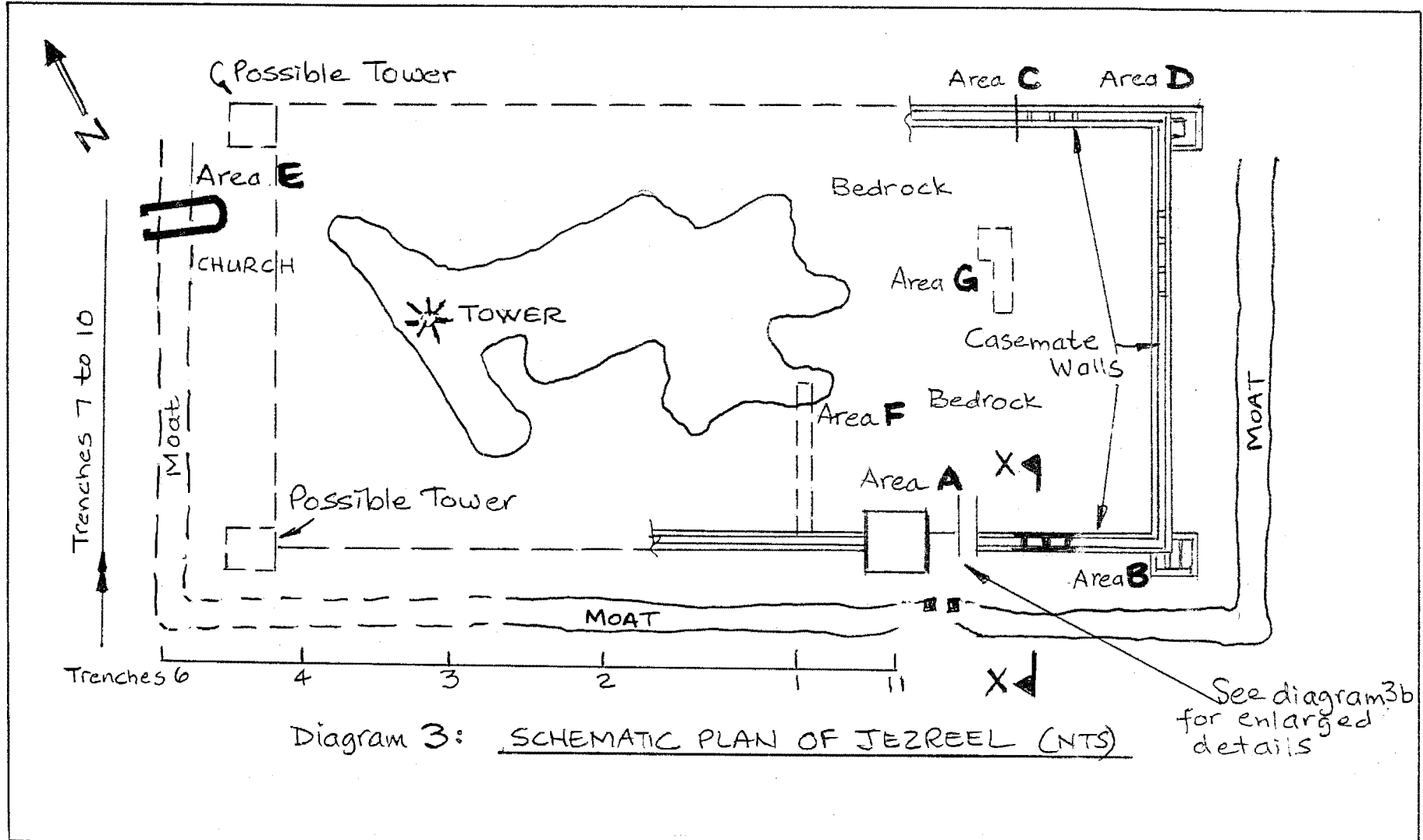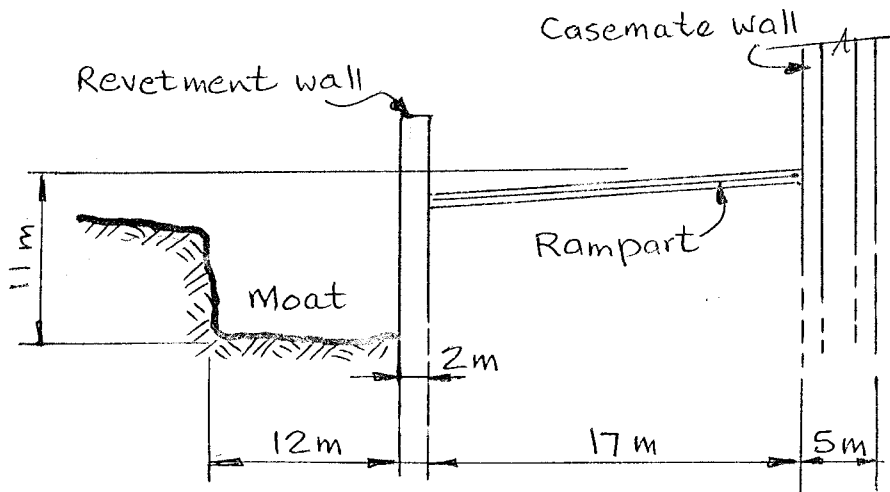
Diagram 3a: SECTION X-X (NTS)

N

Round plastered installation

4 Chambered gate,
but could be 6
chambered.
(Woodhead 1997)

Wall adjoining
casemate wall

Rampart

Plastered installation,
to hold water.
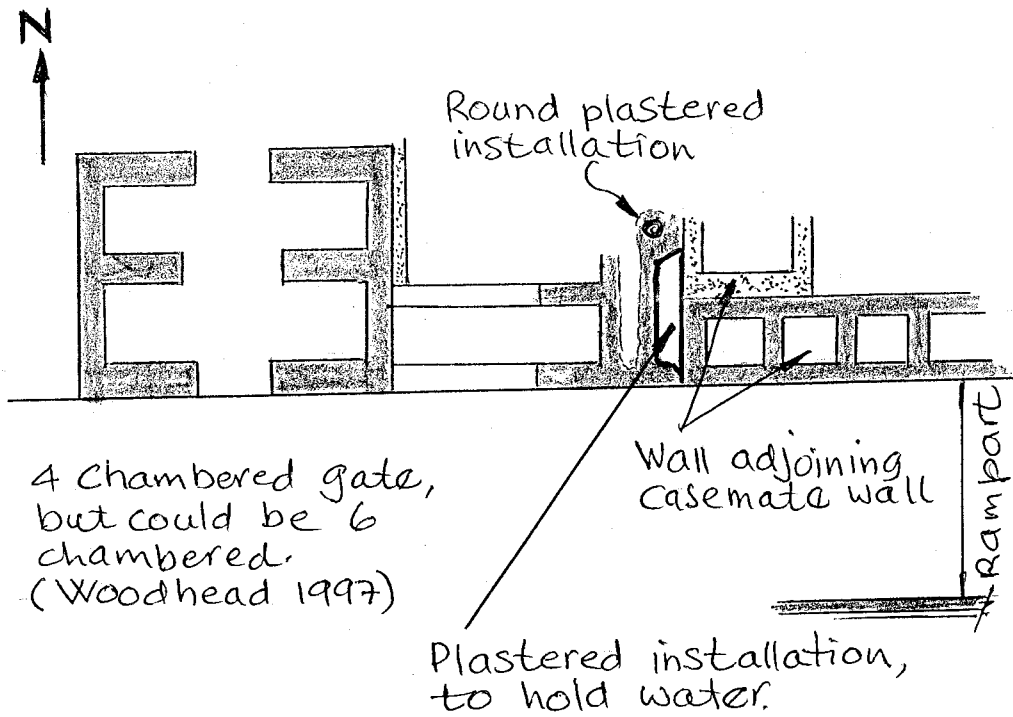
Diagram 3b: ENLARGED DETAIL AT AREA A
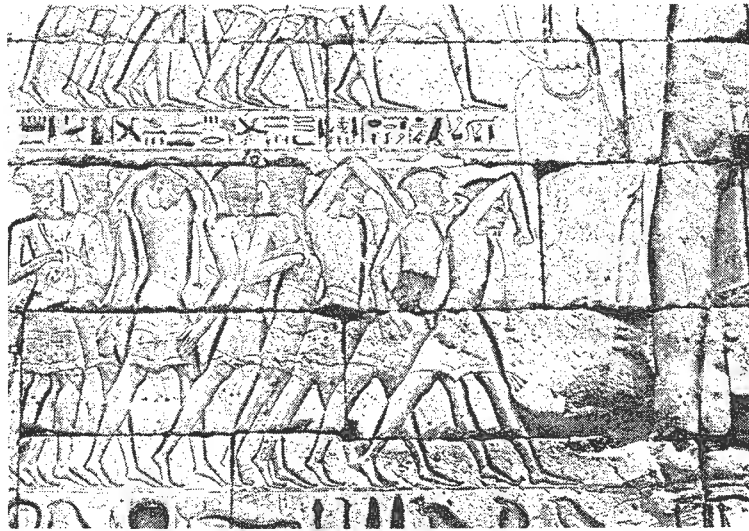
Illustration 1 : Philistine headgear
Ramesses III recorded his victory over the Philistines
on the walls of the temple at Medinet-Habu

Illustration 2a : The Rosetta Stone
The three different languages, each in its own script are shown.

Illustration 2 : The Moabite Stone
This is the only monument of its kind to survive from Palestine.

Illustration 3 : The Monolith Inscription
A potrait of Shalmaneser III is depicted on the face of this obelisk.

Illustration 4a : The Black Obelisk

Illustration 4b : Three Panels on the Obelisk
which show Jehu, king of Israel prostating before Shalmaneser III.
This is the only surviving picture of an Israelite king.
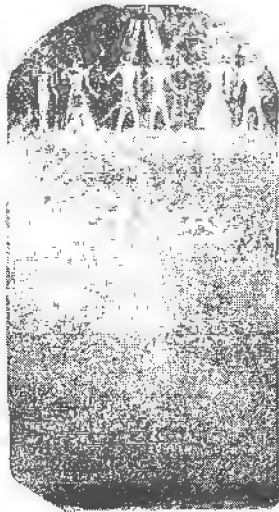
Illustration 5 : The Israel Stele
The name of Israel on this stele is the oldest evidence for the existence
of Israel outside the Bible.

Egyptian Influence

Sphinx

Animal motif - Lions
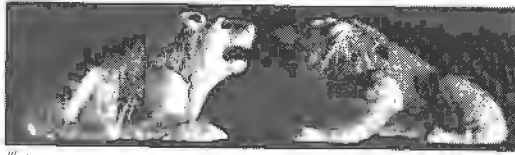
Plant motif - Palm
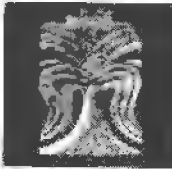
Lotus flowers
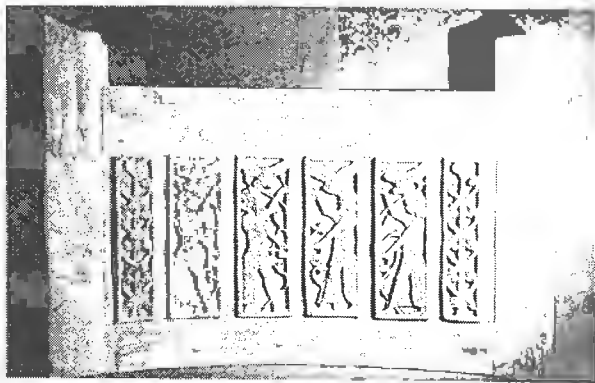
Ivory bed head (Nimrud)
which recalls Amos' condemnation of 'beds of ivory'
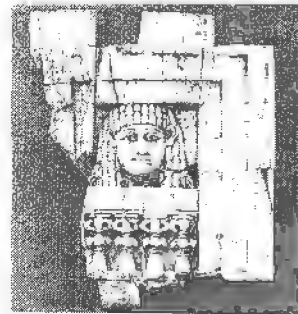
Woman in the window

Sphinx

Illustration 6 : The Samarian Ivories
Examples of the motiffs found on the ivories, and thus an indication of
the various influences from different lands.

Illustration 7 : Seals
A variety of seals, indicating inscripted and pictorial designs. As can
be seen, some seals were set into rings.

Illustration 7a : Balawat Gates
Shalmaneser III. His chariots advance towards Hazazu. These scenes are on
hammered and engraved bronze bands attached to the gates.

Illustration 8a : Assyrians at war
The Assyrians made use of terror in their campaigns of conquest. The
sight of impaled citizens probably facilitated the surrender of a ruler of
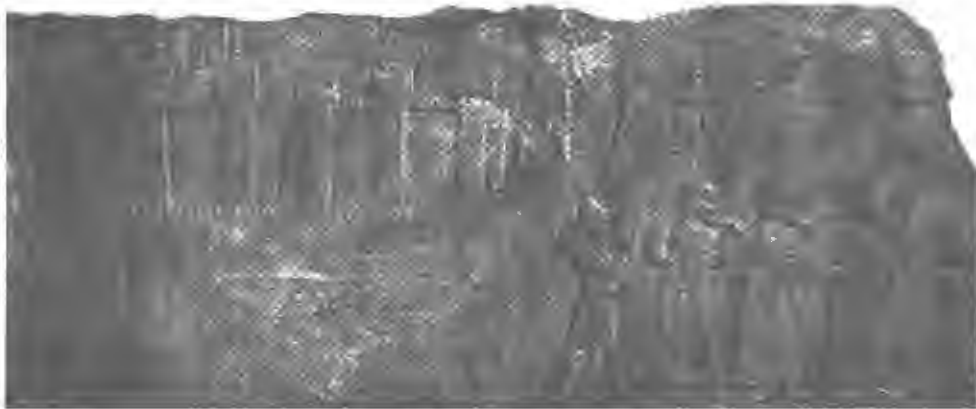a city under attack.

Illustration 8b : Assyrian Deportation Policy
Assyrian soldiers lead the inhabitants of a defeated city away.

Illustration 9 : The Hill of Samaria
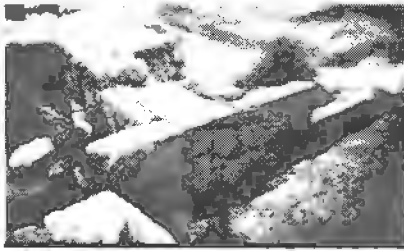View from the south-east.

Illustration 10a : Header and Stretcher Construction
Samaria - wall of royal quarter.

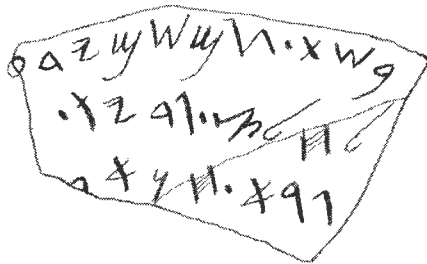**Illustration 10b : Bossed Masonry**
Samaria - outer walls.

Illustration 11 : Ostracon 30 from Samaria
Translation: 'In the fifteenth year. From Shemida to Hellez (son of)
Gaddiyau. Gera (son of) Hanniab.

Illustration 12a : Hazor Walls
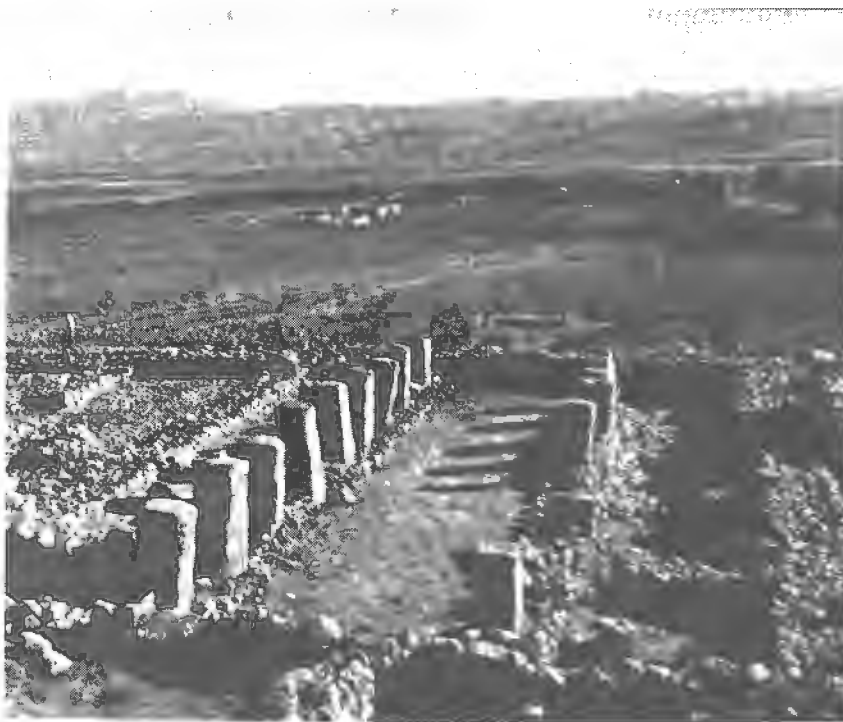The filled Solomonic casements serving as Ahab's fortifications.

Illustration 12b : Ahab's grandeur at Hazor
The pillared building exposed in stratum VIII, Ahab's period.

Illustration 13 : The Tel Dan Aramaic Inscription.

Illustration 14 : Dan - High Place
Header and stretcher construction of ashlars used for the high place.

Illustration 15a : Tell Jezreel
View from Southeast.

Illustration 15b: Inner edge of moat

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Biblical source used throughout:

KJV   King James Version (Authorised Version)

Abbreviations:

BA   Biblical Archaeologist

BAR   Biblical Archaeology Review

BASOR   Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research

IEJ   Israel Exploration Journal

JBQ   Jewish Biblical Quarterly

JNES   Journal of Near Eastern Studies

JNWSL   Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages

PEQ   Palestine Exploration Quarterly

VT   Vetus Testamentum