

- 2 A literal throne is not necessarily meant; the phrase is “the place of My throne”.
- 3 The sanctuary is for the nation of Israel, not the rest of the nations (Ezek. 37:28).

What, then, does the phrase mean? In Exodus 40:34 it is recorded: “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle”. Similarly in the days of Solomon: “And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’S house” (2 Chronicles 7:2).

Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord enter the sanctuary, and he describes it thus: “Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory

of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face” (44:4). He tells us that the vision of the glory was the same as the vision he had seen earlier (43:1-3). This was the vision of the cherubim. The prophet describes that earlier vision in these words: “Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne” (10:1).

Putting these ideas together, it may be concluded that the glory of Yahweh will occupy the most holy place in the form of the cherubim of glory “as the likeness of a throne”; there will not be a literal throne there.

(To be concluded)

Discoveries at Gezer

Dennis M. Elliott

DAVID DOWN, in his magazine *Archaeological Diggings*, says of the Biblical city of Gezer: “It occupied a tell 650m in length, 250m in width and covering some 30 acres, a very large city for those days—twice the size of Megiddo. It is about 30km northwest of Jerusalem on the way to Joppa. As seen from the Jerusalem to Tel Aviv highway the low and undistinguished hill of Tell Gezer gives no hint of its importance. It is only as you stand on top of the tell that you realise that Gezer had a commanding position—there is an unimpeded view in all directions. The whole coastal plain of Israel is spread out below like a map. Lookouts in Gezer would have seen the whole coastal plain of Israel from Ashkelon in the south to the Mediterranean Sea north of Tel Aviv”.

Gezer is situated at the junction of two trade routes. One was known as ‘The Way of the Sea’ and traversed the plain west of Gezer, linking Egypt with Mesopotamia. A little to the north of Gezer was the main road between Jerusalem and the coast, which the modern highway follows. The strategic importance of Gezer was such that a local ruler or attacking army would be fully aware of its commanding position, for whoever held the city had trade and communications in western Israel firmly under his control.

The discovery of Gezer

The first identification of Gezer was made by a young French scholar, C. Clermont-Ganneau, in

1864. His address to the French Academy of Science outlining his identification of Gezer was challenged with the request to back his claim with inscriptional evidence. The request was hardly appropriate, for, as Down points out, no inscriptional evidence had to that time been found regarding any Biblical site in Israel. It is interesting to note that it transpired that Gezer turned out to be the first site to be identified by inscriptional evidence—and Clermont-Ganneau was the one who had the good fortune to find it!

The story is that in 1874 an Arab peasant of Abu Ghosh (a village on the site of Kirjath-jearim, the place where the ark was located after being returned by the Philistines) informed him that stones had been found at Gezer with what appeared to be writing on them. Clermont-Ganneau lost no time in hurrying to the place, about two kilometres east of the tell, and was excited by what he saw: a flat stone with inscriptions in both Hebrew and Greek.

The inscription in Greek bore the word *alkiou*, which meant ‘belonging to Alkios’, but it has not been discovered to date who this person was or how he featured in the picture. The Hebrew said *t’hum Gezer*, which was translated as ‘belonging to Gezer’. The significance was obvious. This was clearly a boundary marker, and without doubt identified the adjacent tell of Gezer.

Clermont-Ganneau correctly surmised that if this was a boundary stone then there should be several others, and, after a search, came upon

them—six in number. The Turkish occupying power of Palestine took possession of some of them and transferred them to Jerusalem, then to Constantinople, modern Istanbul, and two of the stones are still there today. Three more are still at Gezer but are difficult to locate.

Gezer was excavated by R. A. S. Macalister from 1902 to 1905, with further digs during the period 1907-9. Later archaeologists were amazed at the manner in which he did the work, cutting thirty strips right through the tell to bedrock in a northerly to southerly direction. Each successive strip that he dug was deposited on the previous strip which was, according to Down, "Archaeology by destruction", thus complicating the work of archaeologists who followed him. Major excavations took place during the period 1964-84, directed at different times by G. E. Wright, William Dever and J. D. Seger.

The Biblical city

We find the first mention of Gezer in the Bible in Joshua 10:33, relating to the time when the Israelites were invading Palestine, about 1400 B.C.: "Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining". When the land was divided among the tribes, Gezer was allocated to the Joseph tribes (16:3), but "they [the children of Ephraim] drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute" (v. 10).

However, this arrangement must have been disrupted when the Philistines occupied Gezer, and David warred with them there: "And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines" (1 Chron. 20:4). By the time of Solomon, Gezer appears to have regained its independence, for we read that Pharaoh provided his daughter with a rather unusual dowry when she married Solomon: "For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife" (1 Kgs. 9:16).

Notable among Macalister's discoveries were ten large pillars, three of which are reputed to be the biggest ever to have to have been excavated in ancient Palestine. He also found an ingenious water tunnel, together with a cistern, which provided the inhabitants of Gezer with a secure water supply in the event of the city being besieged.

David Down makes the comment that the 'fertility pillars' have been dated to the Middle Bronze (MB) period, and that they are located near the top of the tell. The remarkable water system also dates from the MB Period.

Dr. Rudolph Cohen identifies the MB I people as the invading Israelites. The conquest and destruction of Gezer would have taken place during the MB II period, and there is credible evidence that the wall of Gezer was aggressively destroyed at this time.

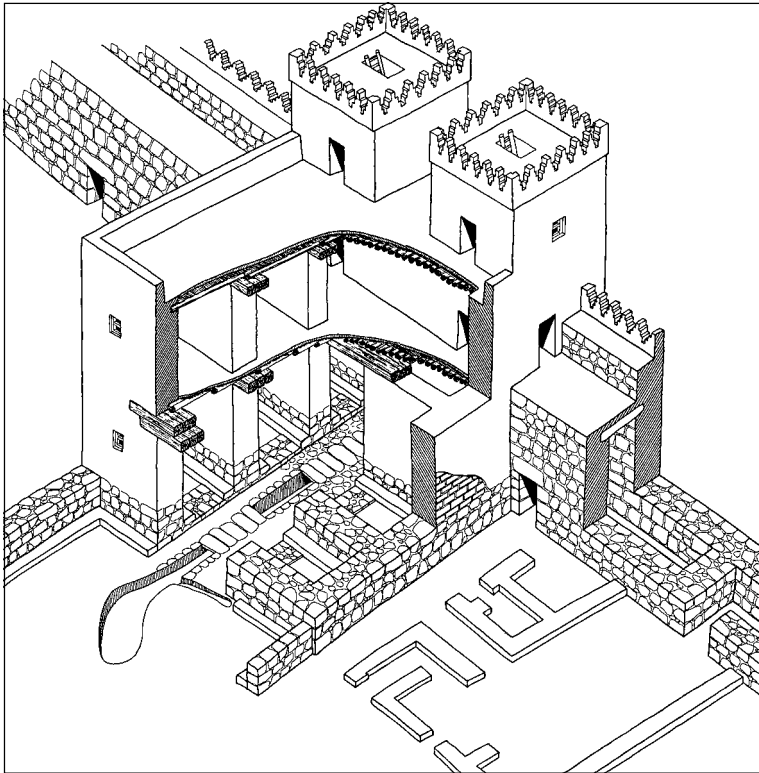
It has to be borne in mind that when it came to interpreting the archaeological evidence from Gezer it was not a simple process, for much hinges upon acceptable dating. It must be pointed out in this regard that the Biblical chronology is unambiguous, whereas the corresponding Egyptian chronology is not. According to the traditional dating, Solomon reigned during the twenty-first dynasty of Egypt, and the corresponding stratum would be during the beginning of Iron Age II.

Archaeological Diggings quotes Israeli archaeologist Ronny Reich as saying (in the Israeli geographical magazine *Eretz*): "The section of fortifications from the Middle Bronze Age II that is exposed along the southern side of the tell is impressive . . . Macalister unearthed a massive fortified internal wall . . . he also exposed the gate to the city . . . The gate's passageway was narrowed by three pairs of doorjambs from which the double doors of the gate were certainly hung". Down makes the observation: "If this was the work of the Israelites they certainly did a good job".

In the same chapter that we read of Solomon receiving the city from Pharaoh, we are told that he built the city: "And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether, and Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land" (1 Kgs. 9:17,18).

David Down makes the comment: "There has been much argument over the dating of the gate of the city. Macalister first identified it as a tower from the Hasmonean Period. Yadin claimed it was from the time of Solomon. Subsequently it was attributed to the time of Ahab, but then Dever asserted it was from the period of Solomon. The destruction level from the time of Pharaoh, who burned the city, could not be positively identified".

Another candidate for carrying out building work at Gezer is King Asa, for 2 Chronicles 14 says of him: "he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those



The gate at Gezer.
Archaeological reconstruction
drawing. By courtesy of
Brother Leen Ritmeyer.
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years; because the LORD had given him rest. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us . . ." (vv. 6,7).

Ancient writing

Another striking find at Gezer was what came to be known as the Gezer Calendar, which Macalister discovered in 1908. It measures ten centimetres in height and seven centimetres in width, and was only partially complete. Dated to 1000 B.C., it was at that time the earliest Hebrew inscription found in Israel. The nature of the writing is rather primitive, and could conceivably have been done by a farmer, or one of his children in the process of doing homework. A rectangular opening bored through the lower half may have been for the purpose of enabling it to be hung on the wall for reference. This interesting calendar reads:

"Two months of ingathering. Two months of sowing. Two months of late sowing. A month of pulling flax. A month of barley harvest. A month when everything else is harvested. A month of pruning. A month of summer fruit".

This remarkable discovery is also in the Istanbul Museum.

It seems from another inscription that was found at Gezer that the people there were quite literate. This was an ostrakon—a fragment of pottery upon which is some Hebrew writing. It was found in 1929. It contains only a few barely distinguishable letters, but nevertheless it reveals that the people of Gezer were familiar with writing at an early period in Jewish history.

It is of interest to learn that Assyrian inscriptions refer to Gezer as 'Gazru'. In the eighth century B.C. Tiglath-pileser conquered the city and memorialised his triumph in a wall relief at his palace in Nimrud. During the period of the Maccabees, Gezer was a well-known fortress city. It was fortified by the Syrians in 160 B.C. but was taken by Simon Maccabeus in 142 B.C., who built a place of residence there.

Just as events in the world about us are being directed towards the ultimate end of the governments of men, so too the amazing work of the archaeologists in Biblical lands seems to have been providentially ordered by the God of Israel, making possible the unearthing of places mentioned in the Bible though long buried in antiquity.