

and Revelation 17–19. He remarks on how Jesuit priests have linked Revelation 17–19, not with the Roman Catholic Church, but with a satanic figure called Antichrist who will reign over the world from Jerusalem for three and a half years. Many will clearly be deceived by this wicked teaching into thinking that Jesus is an imposter when he returns, and heed the rallying cry of the papacy to go and fight against him.

Brother Robinson has some stimulating comments on Joel 3 and the seven thunders in

Revelation 10, and also on the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25, which he applies, rightly in the reviewer's opinion, to the nations and not just to responsible individuals.

The book has six useful appendices, and is highly commended to all who want to understand this prophecy better. It transports the mind to the eternal things of the Kingdom of God, which our Lord said we should seek first, along with God's righteousness.

# Out of the earth

News and views from the world of archaeology

Tony Benson

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## Discoveries in the Northern Kingdom

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**T**HE HISTORY of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel is a turbulent one, with dynasties overthrown and new ones established. About fifty years after its establishment, a new king, Omri, became sole ruler after a period of civil war. Archaeology indicates that under Omri and his son Ahab Israel was a significant power, although the Bible does not speak of this, being concerned with the wickedness of Ahab and his clashes with the prophet Elijah.

The record of Omri's reign is very brief, being limited to 1 Kings 16:23-28, a witness to the Divine origin of the Bible, for a secular history would have trumpeted his achievements. One significant event in his reign is mentioned, however: his establishment of a new capital on a hilltop purchased from a man called Shemer, from whom the city gets its name Samaria. It has been excavated twice, in 1908-

10 and again in 1931-35. These excavations revealed extensive facilities for treading grapes and pressing olives, and about 100 cisterns.

Recently Norma Franklin of the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology, a researcher specialising in the period of the kings of Israel and Judah, was studying plans drawn by the first excavators and noted amongst the cisterns two rectangular chambers. She visited the site to examine them and concluded that they were tombs. They were located underneath the remains of a large palace, believed by archaeologists to have been the palace of Omri and Ahab.

According to Franklin, one of the tombs must have been cut out of the rock when the palace was built, though the other could have been cut out afterwards. Only kings would have been buried in such a location, and the fact that one tomb was excavated when the palace was built indicates that Omri intended it for himself, with the other being for Ahab.

Isaiah 14:18, referring to the triumph of Babylon over the nations of the Middle East, says, "All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house", and Franklin says it was the custom in the Middle East for kings to be buried in tombs under their palaces.

**Source:** "Lost tombs of the Israelite kings", Norma Franklin, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Jul./Aug. 2007.

**O**NE of the most notorious characters of Scripture is, of course, Ahab's wife Jezebel. In the early 1960s a seal was donated to the Israel Department of Antiquities from a private collection. In a recent study, Dr Marjo Korpel of Utrecht University in Holland presents evidence that this seal was the seal of Queen Jezebel. It is large, befitting royalty, and bears symbols indicating that the owner was both female and royal. Unfortunately the seal is chipped at the top, where the name of the owner appears, so that it cannot be read, but Dr Korpel claims that what remains is consistent with it being Jezebel. Though Korpel, who is an Old Testament scholar, not an archaeologist, says she is ninety per cent sure that it is Jezebel's seal, no archaeological authority has accepted the claim. The problem is that archaeologists do not know where it was

found and are therefore reluctant to comment.

**Source:** "Dutch scholar believes seal was Queen Jezebel's", Etgar Lefkovits, *Jerusalem Post Christian Edition*, Dec. 2007.

**T**HE dynasty established by Ahab was overthrown by Jehu, described as "the son of Jehoshaphat [not of course the king of Judah of that name] the son of Nimshi" (2 Kgs. 9:2). Archaeologists excavating Tel Rehov, north of Samaria, have found a number of beehives, which have been dated to the early years of the ten-tribe kingdom. Three storage jars nearby are inscribed with the name of the owner, Nimshi. Though we cannot imagine the hyperactive Jehu in the peaceful role of a beekeeper, it seems as though he may have come from a family of beekeepers. The discovery of the hives is of great interest to archaeologists, who have previously only found evidence of organised beekeeping in later times.

**Source:** "Land of milk and honey lives up to its name", Etgar Lefkovits, *International Jerusalem Post*, date not known.

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## Ancient quarries in Jerusalem

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**A**LONG the northern wall of the Old City of Jerusalem, between the Damascus Gate and Herod's Gate, and close to the site believed by many to be where Jesus was crucified and buried, is Zedekiah's Cave. I recall that in 1987, on the first day of my first visit to Israel, the party I was with was taken into this cave by our guide as part of a conducted tour of Jerusalem. Its name derives from the fact that, according to a third-century-A.D. Jewish legend, the cave stretch-

es all the way to Jericho and was used by Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, to escape from the Babylonians when they took the city. This unsuccessful flight is recorded in 2 Kings 25:4,5, which says nothing about a cave, and the Jewish legend clearly has no foundation in fact.

The cave was discovered in the mid-nineteenth century by James Barclay, Protestant missionary and explorer of Jerusalem. Another ancient legend is that the cave was used as a quarry for the stones of Solomon's Temple, hence the alternative name of Solomon's Quarries, but there is no substantive evidence for this. There is abundant evidence of quarrying activity, however, and it is believed that Herod the Great used it for building material for his massive building works on the Temple Mount. The land slopes gently down from here to the Temple Mount, making the transportation of the stones relatively easy. It was also used by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century to obtain stones for the building of the present walls, after which it was sealed. Barclay only discovered it because his dog disappeared through a small hole.

The cave was developed as a tourist attraction in 1985, with paths and lighting being installed, but closed after the outbreak of the Second Intifada several years ago. It was scheduled to be reopened for visitors at Passover 2007. There is much interest in the cave due to stories that it stretches back under the Temple Mount and that the treasures of Solomon's Temple or of Herod's Temple were hidden there when these temples were destroyed. It is revered by the Freemasons, who claim to have been founded by the builders of

Solomon's Temple, and they hold ceremonies there.

**Source:** "King Zedekiah's secret escape route", Yadin Roman, *Eretz*, Apr. 2007.

**A**NOTHER source of stones for Herod's Temple has recently been discovered in Ramat Shlomo, a new suburb four kilometres northwest of the Old City. The discovery was made when archaeologists were given the chance to examine a site designated for a new school. The Jerusalem area has many old quarries, but this particular one can be identified as having been used to obtain stones for Herod's Temple because of the enormous size of stones found at the site, quarried but not transported to the temple site, and coins and fragments of pottery dating back to the first century. Stones of this size have only been found in the retaining wall of the Temple Mount. The quarry is on a ridge about eighty metres higher than the Temple Mount and adjacent to an ancient road leading to the city. Presumably the abandoned stones were not used because they were not of the highest quality.

**Source:** "Sensational Second Temple find", Etgar Lefkovits, *International Jerusalem Post*, 5-11 Oct. 2007.

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## South of the Temple Mount

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**T**HE area south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem has been particularly rich in archaeological discoveries, especially after Israel gained control of this area in June 1967, and more finds keep being made. Last year archaeologists working at the north end of the City of David, the site of the original city conquered by David, and located on a ridge running south from the Temple



**View of the south side of the Temple Mount and the City of David.**

Mount, were looking for traces of an ancient road when they broke through into a large drainage channel. Pottery remains and coins enabled it to be dated to the Second Temple period.

It is known from Josephus that such an underground channel led south from the Temple Mount to emerge at the Pool of Siloam at the bottom end of the City of David, a distance of about a kilometre. Its function was to drain water from the Temple Mount area in times of heavy rainfall. It is of particular interest because Josephus says that when the Romans took Jerusalem in A.D. 70 many Jews took refuge in this channel and fled from the city via its southern end. We wonder if there were early believers in Jerusalem who used this means to flee from the city when our Lord's prophecy of the destruction of the city was clearly soon to be fulfilled. Luke 21:21 refers both to those in Judea and to "them which are in the midst of it [Jerusalem]" needing to flee.

**Source:** "Archaeologists uncover tunnel used by Jews to flee Romans", Amy Tiebel, *Jerusalem Post Christian Edition*, Oct. 2007.

**A**BOUT eighteen months ago I reported on the claim of Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar to have discovered the remains of the palace of King David at the north end of the city of David ([Sept. 2006, p. 339](#)). Mazar has been continuing her excavations in this area and has discovered an ancient wall at the back of the palace. When the news broke last autumn, a thirty-metre length of wall and the remains of a tower had been excavated.

Abundant pottery remains were also found, along with seals, bullae (impressions of seals on clay) and arrowheads, and these enabled Mazar to date the wall to the fifth century B.C. As this was the time when Nehemiah was governor of the land under the Persians, this wall is likely to be that constructed by Nehemiah in fifty-two days of intensive activity, as recorded so vividly in the book that bears his name.

**Source:** "Nehemiah's wall found in Jerusalem", Etgar Lefkovits, *International Jerusalem Post*, date not known.

**A**LITTLE to the west of the excavations referred to above is the Dung Gate, now the main access to the plaza facing the Western Wall, the most holy Jewish site. Archaeologists have been excavating in a car park just outside the gate prior to the expansion of the car park. They have discovered the remains of a large palace dating back to the first century A.D. This area was known as the Lower City in New Testament times, and was an area of small houses. Palaces were typical of the Upper City,



**The Dung Gate.**

located on higher ground to the north, where the wealthy priestly families lived.

This palace is thought to be that of Queen Helena of Adiabene, a territory beyond the Tigris River in Mesopotamia. She was in fact the queen mother of that country, which was outside of Roman control, and her son Izates was the king. Along with

her son she became a convert to Judaism, and it is known that she built a large palace for herself near the temple. Josephus records that in the famine foretold by Agabus (Acts 11:27-30) she provided large quantities of food for the people of Judea, and her son contributed a large sum of money to the leaders of the city for famine relief. It

is likely, however, that those who had embraced the gospel would not have benefited from this largesse, hence the need for Gentile converts to provide help, as recorded in the above passage.

**Source:** "Uncovered ruins thought to be palace of Queen Helena", Etgar Lefkovits, *International Jerusalem Post*, date not known.

# In the grain fields on the sabbath

## 1. Christ's challenge to the authorities of his day

Malcolm Window

*This three-part study draws lessons from the occasion when the disciples of Jesus ate of the corn as they walked through the fields on the sabbath, and were criticised by the Pharisees for breaking the Law. In this first article we consider the challenge that the teaching and actions of Jesus presented to the acknowledged leaders of his day.*

IT IS EASY, with the benefit of hindsight and the guidance of the written word, to condemn the Pharisees and decry their lack of empathy, their rigid and ritualistic way of interpreting the Law, the way in which they lost sight of the basic foundation principles that make up God's laws, and instead became dominated by outward externals. But where would we be if we were living in the time of Christ? Whose arguments would we find appealing? Whose authority would we accept?

### Christ and the authorities

On the one hand there were the Pharisees, people who were widely respected. They were learned, they had the years of experience behind them. They were, by and large, looked up to as the spiritual leaders of the people. They had tradition on their side. They did things the way their grandfathers had done, and their fathers before them. They were the faithful custodians of the national religion.

On the other hand there were Christ and his disciples. They were comparatively young. They did not respect the traditions of the fathers, but spoke out against them, denouncing them as hypocrisy. Christ was different from anyone they had ever heard before. His words sounded right, they had a ring of truth about them, yet the scribes, chief priests and Pharisees all hated him and denounced him. The leaders of the Jewish universities, the teachers at the rabbinical schools, the members of the Sanhedrin—all the academics, all the great minds of their day—had rejected him.

"This man Jesus is dangerous", they said, and pointed to the way he so flagrantly rejected the teachings of the law. "Look at the sabbath", they said, "a day in which God specifically commanded us not to work, and yet here is Jesus using this day to perform some of the greatest works you could ever imagine. On so many occasions, in so many ways, he shows contempt for what our law teaches. He touches lepers, the dead, things unclean, and yet never offers for his uncleanness. He appropriates to himself the role of priest, and forgives sins, and yet he is not even of the tribe of Levi! He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners, and has no concept of separateness".