

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS AND MISCELLANUS ITEMS**

When considering an archaeological finding, the archaeologist does not regard it as an object by itself but classifies it according to concepts and suppositions formed and accepted in the course of time as proven basic evidence. Such a finding in its turn will become the ground for the explanation of new findings, and so on. Therefore an erroneous explanation of findings will inevitably lead to a chain-reaction of error. If the basic concepts and suppositions are changed then the explanation of the different findings must also inevitably undergo change. For example the finding of pottery vessels of identical style, in Israel and in Crete, may indicate interrelationship between the two countries, but when these pottery vessels are examined in the light of the concepts and suppositions that the Israelites entered Israel in the period of Merneptah (c. 1200 B. C.), and that the Philistines are originally from Crete, then the conclusion will inevitably be that the Cretans were those whose culture influenced the Israelites and the findings will also be classified accordingly. But if the entry of the Israelites into Canaan occurred at a prior period (i. e. in the reign of Amenhotep III – c. 1406 B. C.), and if the Philistines did not come from Crete, then the conclusion would inevitably be completely opposite –The Israelites would be those who had influenced the Cretans.

If we assume that the Israelites entered Canaan in the period of Merneptah (c. 1200 B. C.) then we will classify all findings from a prior period (c. 1400 –1200 B. C.) as being that of Canaanites, Hittites and others, but not that of the Israelites, who supposedly entered the region later. The same is true regarding geographical places which were not supposed to have been conquered by the Israelites, so that findings found in these sites will not be classified as Israelite objects. In a discussion about the date of the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites, Albright remarks<sup>1</sup> that: "The excavation of Gezer, Ta'anach, Megiddo and Beth shan were not taken into account for the classification of this issue since all these cities remained in Canaanite hands during the period of the Judges, in accordance with Hebrew tradition".

It is generally agreed that the region of Sidon and the northern part of

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1 Albright, *Archaeology and The Date of The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine*, BASOR, 1935, (58), p. 10

the country was not conquered by the tribe of Asher, In the light of such an assumption, it is natural that findings such as Ras Shamra (Ugarit) Tablets, and others (see below) were ascribed to the "Canaanites – Phoenicians". Therefore proximity of these tablets to the Hebrew language and the context of biblical poetry, led scholars inevitably to see in them "a proof" that the Israelites copied the Bible and their way of life from the "Canaanites – Phoenicians".

On the other hand if the invasion of the Israelites into Canaan occurred in the period of Amenhotep III and if as we have already seen they conquered the whole region including Sidon, then the picture is Reversed.

Many scholars<sup>2</sup> regard the verses in the Bible (Ex. 20: 4) "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image..."etc. as evidence and explanation for the paucity of such findings among Israelite findings, But at the same time it must be deduced from the Bible that idolatry worship was a widespread custom among all Israelite classes. Why therefore should idolatrous findings found in the country be referred to as non – Israelite objects (Canaanite and others)? Why should we not regard them as Israelite objects?

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2 For example see: Wright, How Did Early Israel Differ From Her Neighbours, BA. (6), (1), 1943, p. 16.