

MaozNews No. 139
Published every 4 weeks or so
September 2019

© Baruch Maoz

- Some Top Archaeological Discoveries in Israel, pg. 1**
- Israel's Recent Elections, pg.3**
- Ministry News, pg. 4**
- Family News, pg. 5**

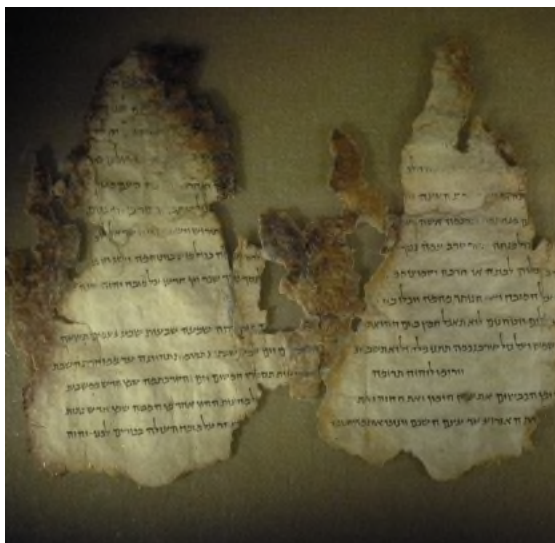
Some Top Archaeological Discoveries in Israel

Based on an article by Nir Hasson Haaretz May 08, 2019

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly passed the resolution to partition Palestine. Eleazar Lipa Sukenik met with an antiquities dealer from Bethlehem and bought some rolled-up parchments and two clay pots. That night, as crowds gathered to celebrate the UN resolution, the professor opened the packages and began to read the ancient writing for the first time in 2,000 years. Lipa Sukenik is the founding father of Israeli Archeology and the story of how he opened the scroll on the 29th of November became its creation story. His son was the general Yigal Yadin, who turned archaeology into a national hobby – some would say obsession.

In countless archaeological digs throughout Israel since its establishment in 1948, exposing human history from the dim reaches of prehistory to the Ottoman era, from narrow exploratory ditches to mega-excavations of tells and whole ancient cities, millions of ancient artifacts and remains have been found.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bar Kochba Letters



Dating: The first century B.C.E. for the scrolls, the second century C.E. for the letters. Where found: The Judean Desert: the Caves of Qumran and wadis.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are the most important archeological find ever. The collection includes over 1,000 texts, including the oldest known copies of all the biblical books, various other books, texts of law, literature of the Judean Desert cult, certificates, and more. They provide us with information otherwise inaccessible, particularly of a fringe group in Jewish society of the time.

“There are ancient texts in China and Egypt, but no such collection that tells the story of your history, and nobody else in the world can read [his people’s] writing from 2,000 years ago,” says Pnina Shor, manager of the Scrolls division at the Israel Antiquities Authority. “Any first-grader [in Israel] can read it, after a few moments of gaining familiarity. That is the wondrous thing about the Scrolls. They open a door to the entire Second Temple period, from the perspective of Judaism and the beginning of Christianity,” not to mention biblical studies and research on how people lived back then, Shor says.

Collecting the scrolls took decades. Some scrolls began to hit the black market before Israel’s establishment – the fact is that Sukenik bought some in November 1947. His son, Yigal Yadin acquired more; some were found in further exploration of the Judean caves and one collection in Jordan was taken in 1967. Recent studies of the ancient parchment, using advanced techniques, revealed texts not discernable by usual means.

Yadin found the Bar Kochba letters while surveying the Judean Desert caves and wadis in 1961. They were signed by Shimon Bar Kochba himself – called Bar Kusiba, at the time, from which we can conclude that this man who would lead the Hebrews to disaster was a tough commander who concentrated the power in his own hands.

The 6,500 Year-Old Chalcolithic Collection



Antiquities Authority collection

Dating: Around 6,500-6000 years Where found: Matmon Cave

In the course of a search for scrolls in the Judean Desert, a delegation led by Pesach Bar Adon found a cave near Nahal Mishmar. Inside it, wrapped in bits of cloth and covered by a stone shelf, they found a treasure of copper cultic artifacts. Archaeologists alerted to the spot thought they had found treasure from the Second Temple, an impression that immediately dissipated, says Dr. Udi Davidovich of Tel Aviv University (TAU): they had found something much older, and just as precious. The items found predated the Temple by 4,000 years or more.

They found 426 items, most made of copper by way of the lost-wax method, six made of hippo teeth and seven of stone. The collection includes wands, bowls and what apparently served as cultic artifacts. Isotopic analysis indicates that some items contain materials rare in the Levant but common in Turkey, attesting to a brisk trading system well before recorded history. The tin component in each of the items, identified by Prof. Yuval Goren of TAU, indicates that the artifacts were manufactured in Israel. This would mean that copper ingots were imported, mixed with tin and then used to create the various items.

Archaeologists do not agree on whether what are assumed to be cultic artifacts were used in a temple near Ein Gedi, if they were grave goods of a high-ranking individual or a stash belonging to passing merchants, hidden some 6,000 years ago. Obviously, they were treasured by their owner’ otherwise, they would not have been hidden, as they were.

The Tel Dan Stele

In 1992, an excavation led by archaeologist Dan Biran uncovered a slab. The expedition's architect Gila Kook noticed writing on the stone slab. "Biran, aged 89 at the time, raced over, knelt down and began to read," says Dr. David Ilan of Hebrew Union College. The slab turned out to be part of a structure erected by the Hazael king of Aram, in the 9th century BCE, commemorating his victory in a conflict with the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.



The Tel Dan stele Oren Rozen Where found: Tel Dan National Park

The slab speaks of the defeat of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel and boasts of the slaying of Yehoram ben Ahab, king of Israel (there is some dispute over part of the debilitated text), and Ahaziah, king of "beit David." There is no dispute about the words "beit David." This is the only known appearance of these words outside the Bible. Their discovery pretty much ended the debate about whether or not King David was a historic figure. Some researchers from Sweden and Britain doubted the authenticity of the slab, arguing that the find was too good to be true. But a following excavation by Biran and Ilan unearthed more of the slab, ending the argument once and for all.

The stele matches the biblical tale of a battle between Israel, aided by Judah, against Aram, in which both the Judean and Israelite kings died. According to the Bible, they weren't killed by the Arameans but by a rebel called Yehu ben Nimshi, who seized the throne in Israel. "I don't see a contradiction because Yehu turned out to be a vassal, and King Hazael of Aram supported the rebellion," Ilan says. Yehu may well have acted at Hazael's instigation and with his support. If that is the case, then Hazael's boast is credible.

Israel's Recent Elections

The finalization and dispatch of this newsletter was delayed until after elections, which took place on September 17th.

For the second time this year, Israel conducted parliamentary elections. The President will now consult with the various parties that gained a seat in our Parliament (the Knesset). The head of the party who received the most recommendations will be asked by the President to form a Government. Since the State's founding, no party ever won a parliamentary majority (61 out of 120 seats). As a result, all our Governments have been coalitions of parties.

As a runner-up to the elections, Prime Minister Netanyahu engaged in a campaign that seems to be designed to scare off Arab voters and delegitimize the election results if his party does not come out on top. Mr. Netanyahu claimed there was extensive fraud in the previously-held elections. The police investigated over 1,000 cases in which fraud was purportedly involved. Only one instance was found – in favor of Mr. Netanyahu's party. Still, the Prime Minister insisted on rushing through legislation, 10 days before elections, that would permit party representatives to film the proceedings in the election booths. The Attorney General, who acts as Legal Advisor to the Government, the Parliamentary Legal Advisor and the Honorable Judge Melchin, head of the Elections Board responsible for overseeing the elections, all protested the proposed legislation, which happily failed.

In an attempt to undermine the likelihood of criminal proceedings against him, Mr. Netanyahu attacked the National Police Commissioner, the State Prosecutor, the Attorney General, the Supreme Court and the judicial system it heads, the Parliamentary Judicial Advisor and the National Elections Committee. Even before the elections were held, he claimed that they were “stolen”. Hoping to garner more votes, he went against the Defense Establishment, touting a Mutual Defense Pact with the US opposed by everyone in the know, including senior defense officials and his own security Advisor. After consistently declining annexation of the Jordan Valley, he sought to win votes from the far right and moderate settlers by proposing the annexation of the Valley and rushing through a Government decision to establish a new settlement there a mere week before elections – while existing settlements are increasingly vacated due to lack of water for their fields (there is no manufacturing industry in the area and the tourist industry is suffering due to Government neglect of the infrastructure).

He travelled for ostensibly “important meetings” with British Prime Minister Johnson and Russian President Putin, advertised his telephone conversations with US President Trump, went against the defense establishment’s advice by publicly owning secret military operations against Iran, took up tough talk toward Hamas and Hezbollah he wisely eschewed until then and accused Benny Gantz, a former Chief of Staff for the Israel Defense Forces and his main political opponent, of “selling out to the Arabs “all of whom want to kill us – men, women, boys, girls and the elderly” – and this from someone who has boasted of his developing relations with a growing number of Arab States.

Mr. Netanyahu waged an hysterical, all-out campaign void of ethical limits, tossing Israel’s national interests to the winds in an effort to secure a get-out-of-jail ticket. Before elections began, he prepared photos of purportedly empty voting stations where his support was expected to surge and busy stations where his opponents were expected to do well, and then called the situation an emergency in an effort to get his supporters out to vote. He broke the law and advertised (doctored) polls at a time when polls were legally forbidden and even sought to start a war in Gaza so as to bolster support – only to be stopped by the military’s top brass.

In yesterday’s elections, 29 parties (!) participated. If Avigdor Liberman’s Yisrael Beiteynu keeps its pre-campaign promise, Mr. Netanyahu will not be able to form a Government; his opponent, Benny Gantz, will and the long road to restoring our democratic institutions will have been paved. The animus between Netanyahu and Liberman is such that the latter is likely to keep that promise.

The final count is yet to be completed and the balance might change. That we will know only in the next day or so. To reduce the likelihood of fraud, technologically sophisticated Israel prefers physical ballots.

Ministry News

I am at the tail end of writing and translating **Bible study notes on the book of Jeremiah**. Next on the list is **Ezekiel**. I am making faster progress than expected, which is encouraging. At the same time, I am writing an Introduction to **Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi**. The three prophets were active approximately in the same period, which is why my commentaries on the three are to be published in one volume. I’ve written commentaries on Haggai and Malachi, and will want to fine-tune them before publication. The commentary on Zachariah

is yet to be written. My commentary on Romans has been laid out, the cover designed, and the whole handed over to the printer. This will bring my series of commentaries on the Minor Prophets to an end.

My **commentary on Galatians** (in English) is now edited and was submitted to the publisher. Kind recommendations of the commentary were received from Joel Beeke, Harry Reeder, Tom Nettles and Tedd Tripp. I continue to preach about once every 6 weeks at our church and, from time to time in other churches in the country.

I completed translation and adaptation to Israel of a **Statement on Christology**, originally published under the auspices of Ligonier Ministries. Christology is a major issue of dispute in Israel and should serve as a rallying point for those churches that affirm a biblical view of our Lord and a dividing line between those churches and those who do not. It is hoped that this Statement will serve to that end. Purported contextualization should never be at the expense of biblical truth; never allowed to obscure the glories of the Savior.

The **bi-weekly course on How to Preach and to Listen to Sermons** continues, with a growing number of attendees and some discernable impact on preaching in our church. My emphasis is on expository preaching, and therefore an emphasis is placed on careful exegesis as a major part of sermon preparation. One of my delights is that, consequent to the lessons already given, our Pastor assumed more of the preaching responsibility in the church, thereby providing the congregation with more consistent and coherent ministry. He is a lay Pastor with a thriving business that makes it difficult for him to find the time for solid preparation. He and I are now discussing **the role and importance of a diaconate**. The class on preaching was joined by a number of eager brethren from the fringes of the believing community. We hope and pray that the course will also challenge them on some aspects of their understanding of the Faith.

Still no news regarding the **sale of our home** here in Israel. As noted in the previous MaozNews, the housing market is very sluggish. Our **relocation to the US** is therefore further delayed. We shall be looking into engaging another Realtor.

Family News

Noam is back at College (Gonzaga) and doing famously. **Maya** is completing her last year at High School and second year at College, likewise, gaining high marks. She enlists into the Israeli military in June of 2020. **Keith** is awaiting final decision with regard to the possibility of employment and **Shlomit** is working part time to help keep the family afloat. **Jonathan** (10) and **Caitlyn** (8), their two children are in public school and eager to get back to a Christian school. **Tamar** is home-schooling **Avishai** and **Eliya**.

We are in the process of negotiating the sale of our home. Early next week it will become clear if the sale is concluded. If so, under the terms offered, we would be able to move by April 2020. However, neither the price nor the timing are our best choice. We await God's providence – his ways are always best.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

You can help by purchasing copies of Baruch's books from Barnes & Noble or from Amazon, by asking for them at your local bookstore **and by posting reviews of these books** on Barnes & Noble or Amazon websites. Positive reviews help us sell.

Come Let Us Reason Together (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church). Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation, Presbyterian and Reformed.

Jonah: A Prophet on the Run a devotional commentary on the book of Jonah, Shepherd Press.

Malachi: A Prophet in Times of Distress a devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. Founders Press.

Colossians: The All-Sufficient Savior a devotional commentary on the book of Colossians. Founders Press.

Soon to be available: Galatian: **He Did it All** a devotional commentary on the book of Colossians.

The commentaries are suited for personal devotions and group studies

Baruch's sermons may be heard on **Sermon Audio**

To remain abreast of developing circumstances in Israel, visit the **MaozWeb** or "follow" Baruch on **Facebook**, **LinkedIn** and **Twitter** (@BaruchMaoz).

Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



LinkedIn



Checks in support of our ministry should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist Church special missions account, POBox 1233, Grand Blanc MI, 48480-3233**. Please designate: "For Soli Deo Gloria", or, "For the ministry of Baruch Maoz". Bank transfers may be made to **Chemical Bank, 2301 W, Big Beaver Rd. Suite 525, Troy MI 48084 ABA Routing 072410013 , Berean Baptist Account 5389484382 Swiftcode: CHEMUS33**

All contributions are tax deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of each calendar year or at donor's request. Please do not send contributions directly to us.

Funds sent for the ministry will be used exclusively for that purpose.

We reserve the right to use personal funds for the purposes of the ministry.