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A Jebusite Fortress from David's Era?

Based on a report by Elie Mendelbaum, Ynet, March 4, 2014

A massive Canaanite fortress, built some 3,800 years ago, was uncovered during a 15-year archeological dig in the City of David led by Professor Ronny Reich of Haifa University and Elie Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Archeological digs in the City of David began in 1867 under jurisdiction of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) led by Captain Charles Warren. The first excavator to reach the thick of the fortress, however, was a treasure hunter by the name of Montague Parker who, between 1909 and 1911 embarked on a search for the Ark of the Covenant and King Solomon's treasures, supposed to have been hidden from the Babylonians somewhere in Jerusalem.

Parker bribed the Turks, who surreptitiously allowed him to dig. In May 1911, an attentive guard who was not among those who received a bribe discovered the dig and Parker was forced to flee for his life. The remnants of the tunnels he dug can be seen in the structure's upper part.



The edifice's walls are seven meters (some 23 feet) thick, composed of massive stone 2-3 (6-10 feet) meters in length and weighing tons. According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, it is the largest Canaanite fortress ever discovered in Israel, and the largest known fortress predating the reign of King Herod. How the builders were able to move the stones and place them as they did remains a mystery.

The fortress hides the biblical Gihon Spring from potential invaders with a massive fortification that allows access only from the city. "To protect the water source, [its builders] built not only the tower, but also a fortified passageway that allowed city residents a safe access to the water source," archeologist G. Uziel explains. The enemy outside would not be able to see the inhabitants as they collected water from the spring. This very impressive structure continued to be functional for hundreds of years, until the end of the Iron Age. Only when the First Temple was destroyed did the fortress fall into ruin.

King David conquered the stronghold from the Jebusites: *David said, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack 'the lame and the blind,' who are hated by David's soul"* (II Sam. 5:8-9). I Chron 11: 4-7 adds: *David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, "Thou shalt not come hither." Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David. And David said, "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain." So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David.* The fortress discovered may well be that through which King David's men entered the city.

I Kings 1:32-35 describe Nathan the prophet and Zadok the High Priest crowning Solomon King in his father's stead at Gihon, that is to say, near the Gihon spring. Researchers now believe that the ceremony took place near where the fortress was found. The structure emphasizes the importance of the location and probably explains the reason David had his son crowned there. "You can come and see: this is where it happened. This is where it all started," says Oriya Desberg, the manager of development at the City of David.

The fully excavated site has reopened to the public and will offer fuller access to visitors who wish to explore a piece of biblical history. A sense of its enormity may be garnered from the attached video: <http://bcove.me/kqsxku1w>

John Meshullam – An Early Jewish Christian Entrepreneur

One of the most fascinating men in Jerusalem of the mid 19th century was John Meshullam. Born in 1799 in England to a wealthy Jewish family, he was still very young when he lost his family. On their way to Jerusalem, they were caught up and killed in riots which had erupted in Saloniki between the Greeks and the Turks, leaving John orphaned. His uncle looked after him and his considerable inheritance until John came of age.

At the age of maturity, efforts were made to persuade him to give the inheritance away to a common fund, but he stood his ground and later left England for Germany.

When he was 19, John visited Saloniki. There he met Joseph Wolff, a Jewish missionary, who was chased out of the synagogue by enraged Jewish officials who requested the Turkish Governor to sentence him to death for preaching the Gospel in the synagogue. John felt compassion for him and appealed to the Governor on his behalf. Wolff was released and smuggled out of town, still in danger of his life. John left for Jerusalem, where he remained three years, during which he learned to speak fluent Arabic.



Joseph Wolff

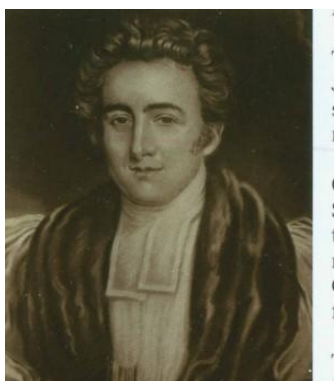
Ever restless, John travelled through Europe and the East, acquiring some thirteen languages. Upon his return to London he heard that Wolff was scheduled to preach in a local chapel. John decided to hear what the missionary had to say. Joseph recognized him and pointed him out to his listeners as the young man who had saved his life in Saloniki. John left that evening deeply troubled, pondering the things he heard.

From London John travelled to Italy, where he married the daughter of a wealthy banker. He was successful in business and earned the respect of his in-laws as well as of the Jewish community. At the same time, he began secretly to attend Christian meetings. When this was discovered John was forced to flee, suffering the loss of his business. He found a

new home and set up business again, but his father-in-law discovered his whereabouts and, when his daughter refused to leave John and return home he stirred up such fierce persecution that the family had to flee, again losing all. They arrived in Tunis with nothing. Nevertheless, John managed to fashion a home out of rubble, and eventually set himself up in the dyeing business.

At some point, when his two elder sons were of school age, he asked Francis Ewald, a Jewish Christian missionary, to take them with him to England, to school. Ewald asked why he, as a Jew, wanted his children to go to a Christian school. John replied that, though he was considered Jewish by all, he wanted his children to be raised as Christians. When the Jewish community heard of this, John and his wife had to flee again, with the loss of all.

They fled to Malta, and there made a stand for their faith. Mary underwent a time of soul searching, but once she made up her mind she never looked back. They were both baptized in Malta by Samuel Gobat, who was later to serve as the second Bishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, and arrived in Jerusalem in 1841 with their younger children, just when Ewald himself began work there under the auspices of the London Society.



Michael Solomon Alexander

The Meshullams were among the first to join the small Jewish Christian community, led by a Jewish Christian bishop, Michael Solomon Alexander.

When the bishop's chaplain left for England leaving the children with no schoolmaster, John's eldest son, Elijah, who had just returned from the school in England, took on himself the charge of twenty children.

John was by then a seasoned businessman. Conditions in Jerusalem were very primitive while Europeans living or visiting in the city were accustomed to a higher standard of living. John began to import furniture, food and other goods from Europe and London. At one stage he invested most of his capital in a large order for furnishings, groceries and supplies from Europe. These were lost on the way, but for two barrels of potatoes. Returning to Jerusalem he was prostrated with an almost fatal illness. While recuperating, an unscrupulous acquaintance took advantage of a small claim he had against the store, took full possession, sold everything off at a loss and left John financially ruined.

The potatoes were all that kept the family alive. As soon as he could stand on his feet, John planted the potatoes in the garden behind his house. John worked hard, and the crop grew. At the same time, he offered his house to a European nobleman who had been unable to find lodgings in Jerusalem for his family, while John and his family moved into a small room on the side and provided for their guest. The new friend suggested they establish a hotel in Jerusalem and both gifted them with furniture he had brought with him and sent more from Beirut -- thus the first true western hotel was established in Jerusalem.

John was encouraged by the success of his first potato crop. He resolved to enlarge his garden and hired a man to help clear the land of rocks. While digging a pit in which to place the rocks, the man struck a buried arch and discovered a large reservoir of water, sufficient for the needs of John's household, and which they shared generously with the local Jewish community. John raised a highly fruitful vegetable garden, watered from his new well. The first crop was donated therefore to the destitute Jewish community. John later opened a store and sold the proceeds.

John further helped the Jewish community by building a stone oven. He produced quality flour, using equipment he had brought from Malta for the use of his own household. But he soon discovered that Europeans loved fresh bread. He taught two Jewish men to operate the oven and to bake, offering them an opportunity to make a decent living.

One year, when wheat was plentiful, he stored large quantities. On the following year, astrologers predicted a famine and the Arabs held on to what they had. Wheat became scarce. The Turkish Governor asked John to sell him his wheat, offering five times the price John had paid, but John refused. He sold large portions to each of the Jewish families in the City charging the price he had originally paid.

John also took advantage of a coal shortage to serve the Jewish community. When the Governor requisitioned every camel load of coal that entered the city, John brought in 20 camel loads. When the Governor sought to lay hold of the coal, John insisted it was needed to heat his guest-rooms and cook. Since the hotel generated income for the city, John was allowed to take the coal, whereupon he distributed most of it to the poorest Jewish families. He also assisted some to make their own business by bringing back small, unnoticed, loads of coal and selling it in the Jewish quarter. This commercial activity became the sole income of their families.

Tragedy struck the Meshullams when two of their small children contracted smallpox. On their way home from the graveside of their youngest daughter they were informed that their youngest son had also died.

Some time later John came across a fertile valley fed by three springs of water. On enquiry he learned that the valley belonged to an Arab tribe that lived outside the country for fear of a blood feud. John struck a deal: he would pay the blood money, enabling them to return, and they would lease him half of the lands, and till that half for him.



Artas in 1940

John established a home for his family. It was uncommon for Jews to live outside the walls, but John farmed well, and was able to sell the produce. In the course of time, he bought more land. His wife, Mary Fua, was known for her Italian hospitality. Over the years, others joined his small settlement, including a delegation of Americans headed by a wealthy widow, and the second British Consul, James Finn. John gave himself to training Jewish men to farm.

Tragedy struck again when his third son came of age. Pedro, sponsored by James Finn and with Finn's backing, treated the Arab peasants poorly. His neighbors complained to John who, concerned lest he lose his good standing with the people, pleaded and remonstrated with Finn to no avail. Pedro was murdered and, to his dying day, John blamed Finn for this tragedy. Partly due to his testimony, Finn was later recalled to England in disgrace. One of John's sons, Elijah, married a Jewish believer and raised a third generation of Jewish believers in the city. His twin daughters were baptized in Christ Church in 1862.

John died in 1878. He and his wife, known among compatriots and expatriates alike for their tenacity, hospitality and kindness, are buried on Mt. Zion, close to Michael Solomon Alexander, the rabbi turned Bishop who headed the believing community in their day.

Ministry and Family News

I have completed work on my **commentary on Colossians**. Those who follow our postings on the various social media will have had access to some of the excitement I have sought to share as I went through the book. Colossians and the **book of Micah** are now being fine-tuned for publication and oral delivery. At the same time, I am translating the **New Testament Epistles**. In May and during the intended trip to the USA, I will be working on the New Testament and on my **Romans commentary**.

I have completed **editing the songs and hymns** we use at church. In the course of this endeavor I was shocked to note afresh the level of theological rubbish and poor language being used for worship. On the second and fourth Sabbaths of each month I **preach at church** and am now going through the book of Micah.

The **Erez family** (Eran, Avital and children) are engaged in a house search in Washington State, close to the **Richardsons** (Marcus, Tamar and their children). **Shlomit's** pregnancy has proceeded well. **Tamar** has joined her sister and is now also expecting her third child. **Bracha is scheduled to return from the USA** after helping Shlomit in mid-August. **Rose's wedding** is scheduled for early September. Bracha will then be returning to the States to assist Tamar in October and in January of next year I am scheduled to lecture in two German locales. We will celebrate our 46th wedding anniversary while in Germany. We're already beginning to give some thought to our 50th, which is just around the corner if the Lord sees fit to spare us.

The **Volynskys** (Felix and Katya) are moving to Canada in July. Do pray for God's blessing on this significant move. **Rose** expects to move in September, following her wedding on the 4th, to North-Eastern England, where her fiancé serves in the Gospel ministry. Pray with us for the two: we hope to give them as good a send-away as we possibly can. Come November, our nest will be truly empty.

We seem to have found a suitable **smaller home** in a nearby township and are seeking to overcome the normal bureaucratic hitches that will enable us to render our contract firm. Meanwhile, we are giving thought to the practicalities of the new home: planning the kitchen, determining where my office will be and how to maximally reduce the costs of time and money in moving and in maintaining the property. At our age, moving is quite a task.

Baruch's sermons may be heard, among other sites, on Sermon Audio. Click this link:

[Baruch's Sermons on Sermon Audio](#)



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