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Tsiyon News

Tsiyon Messianic Radio Newsletter - Vol 8.37 - 07/22/6013 TAM - 09/28/13 AD



7th Month 6013

Midrash Marathon Madness 3

Midrash Marathon Madness Contest Winner #3



During this Biblical 7th month our *Tsiyon Road* radio station is celebrating with a special event called *Midrash Marathon Madness* - All Midrash All the Time! We are midrashing the *entire* book of Genesis in *one month*! For more about this special event go to our home page at tsiyon.org.

An exciting feature of this special radio event this month is our [Midrash Marathon Madness Contest](#). Everyone who enters wins a prize, with special prizes for each week, and a Grand Prize for the entire month! The simple details can be found [here](#).

Now, the really exciting news -

Our third weekly Prize Winner is: **Sonya Ford**

Listen to *Tsiyon Road* to hear Sonya's winning entry on the air - or hear it online at the bottom of the page [here](#).

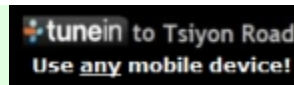
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The Palace of King David

King David is one of the most celebrated figures of the Hebrew Bible, his name mentioned more often than even that of Moses. According to the Bible, David united the 12 tribes of ancient Israel into a great kingdom stretching from Egypt to Mesopotamia, with Jerusalem as its capital. Yet some scholars today question whether this kingdom—and even David himself—ever existed. In the mid-1990s, Israeli archeologist Eilat Mazar proposed searching for the remains of David's palace at a site in the oldest area of Jerusalem. A decade later, with the support of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, she realized this dream. In this interview, hear about her remarkable finds.

While the historic King David remains elusive, Mazar's excavation, as it continues to unfold, may shed more light on this legendary leader. Photo credit:
© Art Resource



Biblical clues

Why did you want to excavate here, in this part of Jerusalem?

Eilat Mazar: We started excavations here because we wanted to examine the possibility that the remains of King David's palace are here. We could have been wrong, but we knew that whatever we would find would likely be important. We are in a very important spot of the City of David [the oldest part of Jerusalem], at the top of the city. It overlooks all the area around, and it's very narrow, only about 60 meters [about 200 feet] wide.

Were there clues in the Bible that this might be the spot of David's palace?

Yes. We knew from the Bible that King David went down to a fortress as he heard the Philistines coming to attack him. Now, where did he go down from? Most probably

from where he stayed, meaning his palace.

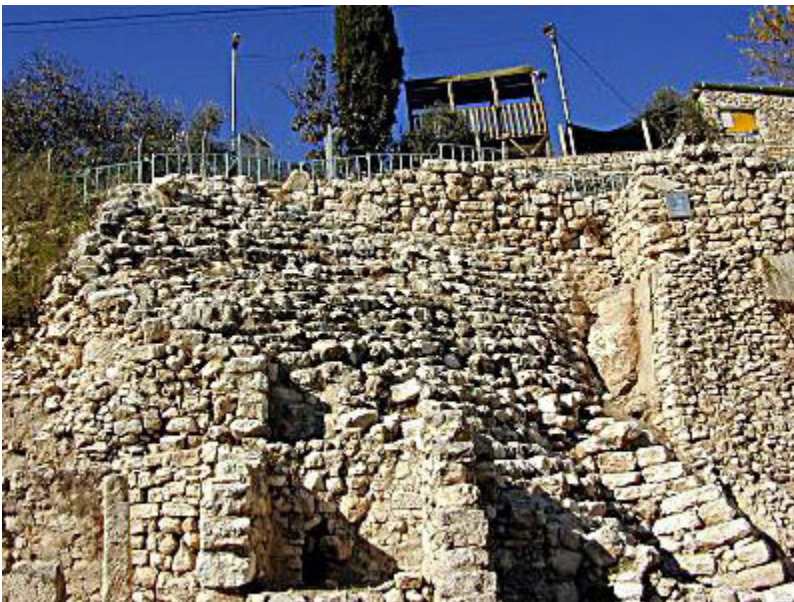
Before our excavations, it was believed that the Stepped Stone Structure [a 60-foot high, terraced structure] here was a support structure for the fortress of Zion, a Canaanite fortress that, according to the Bible, King David captured. Our idea was to excavate just to the north of where we thought the fortress was built.

Did archeologists before you think this area had remains from the time of David?

Some did. In the 1960s, for instance, Kathleen Kenyon's excavation revealed building remains and pottery indicating that a significant structure was built here in the 10th century B.C., meaning more or less around the time of King David [according to the biblical chronology].

When you started your excavation, what was the first sign that you had found something important?

We began to see signs that we were dealing with a very massive structure. Huge boulders started to appear all over the area. And we found walls that were very thick, more than five meters [about 16 feet] thick. I thought it was probably the remains of the fortress, not David's palace. Then, a week or a week and a half later, we started to find a lot of pottery from the 12th or 11th century B.C. in different places under the massive structure. So it couldn't be the Canaanite fortress of Zion, because the fortress would have been built hundreds of years earlier.



Mazar believes the Stepped Stone Structure once helped to support a huge palace complex built into the hillside. Photo credit: Courtesy Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

So you found pottery under the structure, and then you also found pottery on top of the structure, is that right?

Yes. And this pottery together helps us to date the structure. So, under the structure we found a great quantity of pottery that is typical of the 12th–11th century B.C., the late Canaanite pottery. And on top of the structure we found later pottery, typical 10th-century pottery. The structure stands in between these two periods, meaning the building itself must have been built sometime around 1000 B.C.

Is it possible that the dating of the site could be off, that the structure might have been built earlier or later than the time of David and Solomon?

In archeology, it's very difficult to declare such a precise date. I say that the structure was built around 1000 B.C., but it could have been built 50 years before or 50 years after. It's a possibility, although it doesn't make sense to me to prefer these other dates, and I think it's important to take into account the biblical story of King David.

Signs of royalty

Does the pottery you found that you are dating to the 10th century look like the pottery of a palace?

It's beautiful, elegant pottery, certainly a prestigious collection. We also found ivory, including the handle of a knife probably, and most people didn't have ivory at that time. This was not a regular house.

No ordinary household, Mazar says, would have carved ivory, but a royal palace likely would. Photo credit: Courtesy the Shalem Center

Do you now see the Stepped Stone Structure as part of this massive structure you are dating to the 10th century B.C., around the time of David?

Yes. We now see it as part of a huge structure. We are talking about a very complicated and highly skilled plan of construction. There are massive walls on the top, and because the bedrock here is very steep and cracked, these walls needed massive support, and the Stepped Stone Structure offered that support. So the Stepped Stone Structure was not built for a Canaanite fortress; it was built as one unit with the structure that we believe is the palace.

"The question is, how much of the reality that the Bible describes can we archeologists reveal?"

How much of the palace complex have you found—assuming, of course, that it is a palace complex?

The area we excavated occupies less than one-quarter of an acre, and it seems to be only about 20 percent of the whole structure at the top of the City of David. [Work subsequent to this interview has uncovered roughly 10 percent more.] So this is a huge structure, the largest ever found in Israel from the ancient Israelite period.

What convinces you that the structure is a palace?

Such a huge structure shows centralization and capability of construction. It can only be a royal structure. The question is, what kind of structure is it—a fortress or a palace or a temple? We conclude it's a palace because the Bible reports very clearly that such a palace was built. We showed it's not a Canaanite fortress, and we have no indication that another fortress was built. And we know there was a temple on the Temple Mount [north of the site] from that period.

A kingdom doomed to destruction

In light of your discovery, how would you describe Jerusalem at the time of David and Solomon?

It seems to me that Jerusalem at the time of King David and King Solomon was very much like the Bible describes. It was monumental; the constructions were massive. They used the Phoenicians, with their capability and skill, to build the largest structures ever built in Jerusalem: the temple, the two palaces—King David's and later the palace of King Solomon—and the wall of Jerusalem around these structures. This was a new wall that King Solomon added to the ancient wall of the old Canaanite town.

So was Jerusalem the capital of a kingdom as described in the Bible?

King David captured a Canaanite town that was very centralized, very important. He most probably did so purposely and didn't kill most of the people. He continued most of the existing administration. It gave him strength. I believe that Jerusalem continued to be a great metropolitan center and to serve as the capital of the Israelites.





ANCIENT TSIYON? Drawing on Mazar's work, NOVA's filmmakers envisioned what the palace complex might have looked like. Photo credit: © WGBH Educational Foundation

How did the palace of David come to an end? Have you found evidence in your excavation?

We do not yet have clear evidence of the destruction. We may in future seasons. But I believe that it was part of the great destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians. We have lots of other evidence of this destruction nearby.

What was some of the first evidence of the destruction that you and other excavators found in nearby areas?

At the beginning of the 1980s, Professor Yigal Shiloh, a mentor of mine, excavated an area that includes what is known as the Burnt Room and the Bullae House. In their destruction layer, he found pottery typical of this period together with arrowheads that show that some fight was conducted here. It really revealed the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

And more evidence for the invasion and destruction has also emerged, is that right?

Yes. In my excavations at the Ophel, to the south of the Temple Mount, I discovered a royal structure that appears to have been destroyed by an immense fire around 586 B.C. As we excavated, our hands were black with the ashes. And the Bible tells us that the Babylonians set houses on fire.

Evidence of a biblical scribe

Tell me more about the Bullae House. Why does it have that name?

We think it was likely a royal archive. It has the name Bullae House because Shiloh found there, in addition to pottery and arrowheads, 51 bullae. A bulla is a very small seal impression made of clay. They were used by officials sealing documents. They would roll up a papyrus document, tie it with string, and then put a bit of soft clay on top of the string and stamp it with a seal. This kept the document secret, because the seal would be broken if it was opened.

The bullae that first Shiloh's excavation and later my excavation found were remarkably well-preserved. The papyrus was destroyed in the fire, but the clay seal impressions were hardened because of the fire. The amazing thing is, we can actually read the names that were sealed in the clay.

One of the famous names we see is Yehuchal ben Shelemiyahu, a personality we know from the Bible. He was a very high official and minister, a well-known scribe at the end of the First Temple period, in the service of the Judean king Zedekiah. To find the seal impression of such a celebrity is astonishing. It's a case of archeology confirming what is in the Bible.



The name of Yehuchal ben Shelemiyahu, a figure mentioned in the Bible, is legible in paleo-Hebrew script on this clay seal impression. Photo credit: Courtesy the Shalem Center

Do you think there were royal scribes in the court of David or Solomon who were recording things for them? Could those writings have become part of the written Bible?

I believe that King David inherited the very developed scribes and administration that were part of Canaanite Jerusalem. And I'm sure that King David was aware of the importance of written documents. He likely took care to have a very detailed archive that contained administrative documents and also included poems, stories, songs, some of which we probably see in the Bible.

"There is still so much to be done in Jerusalem. Ancient Jerusalem really is not revealed yet."

How important to your work is the text of the Bible?

It's *the* historical source, so important, so fantastically written. The question is, how much of the reality that the Bible describes can we archeologists reveal? Sometimes you find something like the bulla with the name of a minister that appears in the Bible. This happens once in a while. More often you find structures that surely were constructed in ancient times, and the stones, the remains, speak. We need to listen to what they say.

Do you see your work as furthering the legacy of past biblical archeologists?

What we are discovering in Jerusalem now builds on the work of past archeologists, past scholars. I got my first field experience as an archeologist with the famous Professor Shiloh. I was also a student of my grandfather, Professor Benjamin Mazar. He taught me how to observe historical sources, how to examine the archeological remains in light of these historical sources. I learned so much from both of them. And I'm just one part of a long chain. The next generation will continue the work. There is still so much to be done in Jerusalem. Ancient Jerusalem really is not revealed yet.

Eilat Mazar continues to excavate in the City of David, each season revealing a fuller picture of the site. Photo credit: © WGBH Educational Foundation



New revelations

[Editor's note: Since producer Gary Glassman interviewed Eilat Mazar in the summer of 2007 for "[The Bible's Buried Secrets](#)," her team has made a number of noteworthy discoveries, three of which are detailed below.]

An ancient escape tunnel

Early in 2008, Mazar's team found the entrance of what turned out to be an extensive tunnel running under the Stepped Stone Structure. Mazar believes that the tunnel was likely first created before the time of King David to convey water, and then incorporated into the construction of his palace complex around 1000 B.C. She says there is "high probability" that it is the water tunnel called *tsinor* in the biblical story of King David's conquest of Jerusalem (in II Samuel 5:6-8 and I Chronicles 11:4-6).

Mazar thinks that, centuries later, the tunnel may have served as an escape route during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The Bible, in the Second Book of Kings (25:4), describes King Zedekiah's escape through such a tunnel during the siege. The tunnel, with walls composed of unworked stone and bedrock, is wide enough to allow passage of one person crawling through at a time. Within the tunnel, Mazar's team uncovered intact oil lamps characteristic of the siege period.

A second royal seal

Two years after the discovery of the tiny clay bulla, or stamp, bearing the name of Yehuchal ben Shelemiyahu, Mazar's excavation brought to light a similar stamp from the same location. In ancient Hebrew script, it reads "Gedaliah ben Pashur." Ben Pashur's name appears in the same verse of the Book of Jeremiah (38:1) as ben Shelemiyahu's. Both men, according to the Bible, served as ministers in the court of King Zedekiah, who reigned from 597–587/6 B.C., just prior to the destruction of the First Temple and fall of Jerusalem.

The prophet Nehemiah's wall?

In an emergency attempt to shore up an unstable structure at the excavation site, Mazar's team chanced upon another important find—the remnants of a wall that Mazar suspects is related to the prophet Nehemiah, who governed Jerusalem around 445 B.C., following the return of the Israelites from their exile in Babylon. An assemblage of pottery, as well as bullae and arrowheads, helped Mazar date the 100-foot-long wall to Nehemiah's time.

According to the Bible, Nehemiah, both a prophet and political leader, was determined to restore Jerusalem as the Israelites' capital a century after its destruction by the Babylonians, and he directed the construction of an enormous wall near David's former palace in a mere 52 days.

NOTES:

The City of David excavation was sponsored by the Shalem Center in conjunction with the Ir David Foundation, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

This feature originally appeared on the site for the NOVA program "The Bible's Buried Secrets".

Interview conducted in Jerusalem in July 2007 by Gary Glassman, producer, writer, and director of "The Bible's Buried Secrets," and edited by Susan K. Lewis, senior editor of NOVA Online

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From Elijah

Our *Midrash Marathon Madness Contest* winner for the third week of this Biblical 7th month, is announced in this newsletter, above. We are getting down to our last week of the contest, so if you haven't entered yet, now's the time! If calling in is a problem, send us a sound file - just get your entry in to win a prize. You could still win our fabulous Grand Prize, our Silver Kingdom Shekel pendant! As I've said before - It's fun and easy to enter, so give it a [go](#).

THE LAST GREAT DAY

This last day of Sukkot is often known as *The Last Great Day*. It is the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles. What is the significance in that? (Lev 23:26)

Both David and Peter tell us that a thousand years is like one day to YHWH. Jewish sages and "Early Church Fathers" alike saw in this a pattern of the ages. They believed that the age of man in which we now find ourselves must last a period of six "days" - six thousand years. This is equivalent to the six days of labor before the Sabbath. It is the period in which mankind labors under the effects of sin and death. The seventh "day" (meaning the seventh Millennium) is equivalent to the Sabbath. It is the period in which Messiah will rule over the earth, reversing the effects of sin and death on mankind and all Creation. The Book of Revelation validates this picture by presenting the return of Messiah, the defeat of His enemies, the exaltation of the overcomers, and His rule over the earth with them for a thousand years. This coming Thousand Year Reign is sometimes called *The Millennial Reign of Messiah*, *The Millennial Reign*, or sometimes simply shortened to *The Millennium*. It is also called *The Messianic Age*.

As we've noted, the pattern for this is found in the six days of labor followed by a seventh day of rest. The calendar of YHWH is replete with seven day cycles like this, for example, the seven year cycle in which even the ground is given rest in the seventh year. All of these cycles of seven point forward to the coming *Messianic Age*.

This brings us to *The Last Great Day*. Sukkot, (Tabernacles) like other moedim, occurs in a cycle of seven, in this case, seven days. Then an *eighth* day brings this series of days to a grand conclusion. What does the eighth day, *The Last Great Day*, signify? It pictures the final state of Creation after the Millennium has done its job. Revelation 21 presents that as a "new heavens and a new earth" AND a New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth. Why? So God Himself can live with us ON EARTH! Notice what things will be like at that time:



3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Rev 21:3-5

God Himself dwelling with men. No tears. No mourning. No crying. No pain. Not even any death. Why? "The first things have passed away." This is the world to come AFTER the Kingdom of Messiah has completely redeemed the Creation. Then, there will be not the slightest vestige of sin or imperfection anywhere! All will reflect the perfections of our loving Creator, with no barriers between us and Him. He will be "all in all to everyone."

Finally, the Last Great Day, the Eternal Day, will have come!

(Ps 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8, Rev 19+20 See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Year_6000)

Blessings and Shalom!

Eliyahu ben David

www.tsiyon.org

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