

# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

## Lesson 30

### Archaeology and the Early Monarchy Hebrew *Teyt - Mem*

Did you see the news reports this week? Copies of news reports were sent to me from the Middle East, the Far East, and even the Midwest! What was the big news? Some codices (early version of a book) made of lead have been brought to light in Jordan/Israel. The Internet headlines call out:

**Could lead codices prove ‘the major discovery of Christian history’?**<sup>1</sup>

**Could this be the biggest find since the Dead Sea Scrolls? Seventy metal books found in cave in Jordan could change our view of Biblical history**<sup>2</sup>

**Jordan battles to regain 'priceless' Christian relics**<sup>3</sup>

The little that is known of these relics so far gives an indication they might date to the first few decades after the church started. They seem to be written in some code, but at least one Biblical scholar who has seen them opined,

The relics feature signs that early Christians would have interpreted as indicating Jesus, shown side-by-side with others they would have regarded as representing the presence of God.<sup>4</sup>

These small, credit card sized books have a long road before they serve us in understanding Biblical history and the history of our faith. They must be placed in safekeeping, authenticated, and then translated/interpreted. Until then, we will likely get glimpses that are exciting and open to widely divergent interpretation.

That seems to be the path for archaeological finds pertaining to the Bible. There always seems to be a set of scholars who have made up their minds in one direction or another, and archaeology often gets interpreted through the scholars' lenses of pre-determined conclusions. Some great examples arise on the issue of archaeology and the early monarchy. We consider those today.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog\\_thelookout/20110330/ts\\_yblog\\_thelookout/could-lead-codices-](http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog_thelookout/20110330/ts_yblog_thelookout/could-lead-codices-)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1371290/70-metal-books-Jordan-cave-change-view-Biblical-history.html#ixzz1IBpJIIv7>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12888421>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## APPROACH

Our goal in studying these issues needs to be one of faith and intellectual integrity. I believe the two go hand in hand. Recently, I received an unusual email from a man who visited our class through the Internet. He suggested that we should not spend time examining the archaeological record because it would lead us opposite of our faith. This is not because he thinks our faith is wrong. This is because he thinks God has purposely allowed archaeology to develop in ways that mislead people so that people will make decisions on faith rather than evidence!

I could not agree with the gentleman. I explained to him that our God is at work revealing himself, not playing a game of “gotcha!” I added that archaeology is not the tool we should use to “prove the Bible.” It is a tool for better understanding the Bible. The obverse is also true, however. Archaeology should not be used in efforts to disprove the Bible. For try as people might, archaeology does not disprove Scripture. It might disprove some peoples’ interpretations of Scripture, but that is a different thing altogether.

This is more and more apparent as one spends time reading the sensational headlines of some who seem more bent on flashy stories of Biblical denial than on real scholarship. These remind me of pseudo-scholars in my legal field, who pronounce edicts to read their names in the headlines when they truly do not know what they are talking about.

A case in point—last week, I was reading the news on the Internet and I came across a piece written by Bart Ehrman.<sup>5</sup> The piece was entitled, “Who Wrote the Bible and Why it Matters.” Ehrman began his piece with an opinion stated as an obvious fact:

Apart from the most rabid fundamentalists among us, nearly everyone admits that the Bible might contain errors -- a faulty creation story here, a historical mistake there, a contradiction or two in some other place.

Ehrman then goes on to suggest that the “problem is worse than that.” He asserts the Bible is “full of lies.”

Now one might fairly ask, why is this a big deal? Who cares what Bart Ehrman says? In response, we should note that Ehrman is a professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He teaches religion, and reportedly has hundreds of students each semester in his Introduction to the New Testament class.<sup>6</sup> He is also

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bart-d-ehrman/the-bible-telling-lies-to\\_b\\_840301.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bart-d-ehrman/the-bible-telling-lies-to_b_840301.html).

<sup>6</sup> [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/living/2014637335\\_webbibles31.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/living/2014637335_webbibles31.html).

a well-published author who constantly writes books on the subject. These are not what I would call scholastic books, but generally more of an effort to publish popular books that parade as academia.<sup>7</sup> A prime example is his newest book entitled, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God — Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*.<sup>8</sup>

Like so many others we have seen and will continue to see in this lesson, Ehrman's views are built on personal readings of the Bible, which are not necessarily fair readings of the text. Similarly, these critics frequently assert as "fact" what are really "personal interpretations" of archaeology. Our goal is to try and find fair readings of both the Biblical text and archaeology. We do so believing that one can read the Bible in a way that contradicts archaeological findings, or one can read the Bible fairly and find it consistent with archaeology. One can also interpret archaeological finds in a way that is inconsistent with one's reading of Scripture, or one can interpret it in ways that are consistent with a fair reading of Scripture.

Our goal and approach, then, is to first make sure we are reasonable with Scripture, understanding it for what it says as opposed to what others say it says! We will then consider some key archaeological finds that are relevant to our study.

### FIRST A HEBREW LESSON

Before we go into the archaeology and Biblical texts in this lesson, we need to add five more letters to our Hebrew literacy! Thus far, we have covered the first eight Hebrew letters: *aleph* (א), *beyt* (ב), *gimel* (ג), *daleth* (ד), *hey* (ה), *vav* (ו), *zayin* (ז), and *cheyt* (ח). We have also learned the words:

בֵּית ("Beyt") "HOUSE"

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<sup>7</sup> There is an ironic humor in Ehrman's assertion that those who do not agree with him are scholastic lightweights. "Look at their credentials. None of them teaches at state universities, Ivy League schools or prominent four-year liberal-arts colleges. People with those views would never get a job at UNC." ([http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/living/2014637335\\_web\\_bibles31.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/living/2014637335_web_bibles31.html)). In reply, one might suggest Ehrman listen to the lecture given by Dr. Peter Williams at the Lanier Theological Library and posted on the website [www.LanierTheologicalLibrary.org](http://www.LanierTheologicalLibrary.org). Williams directly refutes Ehrman's views on Biblical authorship. Williams also teaches Biblical Hebrew at Cambridge University—a far cry from UNC!

<sup>8</sup> Ehrman, Bart, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God — Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, (Harper 2011).

אב (“*ab*” or “*av*”) “FATHER”

דוד (“*David*”) “DAVID”

יהוה (“*Yahveh*”) “YHWH” (Although technically we have not learned the first letter yet of Yahweh yet. But that is about to change! The next five letters follow:

### *Teyt*

This next Hebrew letter rhymes with *cheyt* but is a “t” sound. It is the letter “teyt” and is written:

ט

### *Yodh*

*Teyt* is followed by a letter we have some familiarity with, even if we have not learned it. It is the letter *yodh*. *Yodh* looks like a fist at the top of a hand.

י

It has a “y” sound although some people use the English “j” when rendering the letter into English. *Yodh* is the first letter in YHWH, (“Yahweh”). It is written toward the top in a row of text. So for example, Yhwh is written: יהוה which is (right to left) *yodh, hey, vav, heh*.

### *Kaph*

*Kaph* is a letter that makes a “k” sound. It is an unusual letter in that it has two forms:

כ ך

The form on the left is the typical form. The one on the right is the form the letter takes when it is the last letter in a word. *Kaph* is one of five Hebrew letters that

take a different form when they are at the end of a word. It is almost as if the bottom part of the normal letter gets pulled down or straightened out to make the final form.

### ***Lamed***

*Lamed* derives from the letter that ultimately becomes the English “l.” It does not necessarily look like an “l” but it sounds like one! The letter is unusual, even for a Hebrew letter! It looks like:



The top of the *lamed* is written high on the line, above the top of other letters. It often crowds the line written above it.

### ***Mem***

*Mem* is the next letter. Like the *kaph*, *mem* also has two forms, depending on whether it ends the word or not. *Mem* originally came from a picture for water, and the top of the letter still bears a resemblance to waves in both forms:



The letter on the left is the typical *mem* and the letter on the right is the final form.

These letters give us 13 of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. We are well over half way to completion! What can we do with our new letters? As we study the archaeology of King David and King Solomon, we can use three of these letters in a way we may already be a little familiar with.

There is a Hebrew word that gets a lot of use in our study. It is the word מלך. Do you recognize the letters? Reading right to left we have *mem* – *lamed* – *kaph*. You will see the *kaph* is in its final form because it comes at the end of the word. The letters are pronounced m-l-k. Once vowel sounds are added, these letters become the word for “king.” The Hebrew for “king” is Melek or, since sometimes people use “ch” instead of “k” for the English side of the Hebrew letter *kaph*, “Melech.”

Can you think of where you might have seen this word in the Bible? It is actually the first part of a two-part name first found in Genesis. As a clue, consider the Hebrew *zedek* means “righteousness.” The “king - righteousness” would be Melech-zedek or “Melchizedek!”<sup>9</sup>

Armed with our Hebrew, let us turn our study to מלך-דָּוִד *melek* David (King David!)

## THE KINGDOM OF DAVID AND SOLOMON

In a study of archaeology and the early monarchy, our focus narrows most carefully on *Melek* (מֶלֶךְ) David and *Melek* (מֶלֶךְ) Solomon. The reign of Saul was not built around any expressed capital (like Jerusalem) and so the necessary limitations of his reign cover issues related to the Philistines, which are similar to those we will cover with David.

The December 2010 National Geographic cover story pictures David and Goliath and introduces the article entitled “Kings of Controversy.” The subtitle to the article asks:

Was the kingdom of David and Solomon a glorious empire—or just a little cow town? It depends on which archaeologist you ask.<sup>10</sup>

The article notes that the “old-school proposition ... that the Bible’s description of the empire established under David and continued by his son Solomon is historically accurate”<sup>11</sup> has been under assault for the last 25 years. The critics of the Bible consistently point out that “despite decades of searching, archaeologists had found no solid evidence that David or Solomon ever built anything.”<sup>12</sup>

The article pits the views of Eilat Mazar against Israel Finkelstein, noting, “In no other part of the world does archaeology so closely resemble a contact sport.” The article highlights disputes among scholars about whether or not there was a King David and if so what kind of king he may have been. Finkelstein considers him,

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<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew adds a *yodh* to *melechm* which makes the word mlky-zdk or “my king is righteousness.” This gets us to the English transliteration Melchizedek.

<sup>10</sup> Girard, Greg, “Kings of Controversy,” *National Geographic*, (Dec. 2010) at 67.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* at 72-3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

A raggedy upstart akin to Pancho Villa, and his legion of followers more like ‘500 people with sticks in their hands shouting and cursing and spitting—not the stuff of great armies of chariots described in the text.’<sup>13</sup>

This article does not seem to be written from a position of either faith or cynicism. That helps us identify issues. If we were to approach this archaeological endeavor looking at the issues determined by one school or another, then it might distort and bias our approach simply by determining which issues we consider or fail to consider. If we can use an unbiased “news” presentation of the issues, while it does not resolve issues, then it at least sets out those that we should address.

The article sets out five areas of archaeological/Biblical debate:

- The City of Two Gates (a border town named “Shaaraim”)
- The City of David (David’s palace at Jerusalem)
- The House of David (David as a notable progenitor of a lineage of kings)
- Solomon’s Fortified Cities (Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer)
- Ancient Copper Mines (Necessary for the Biblical account of extensive bronze used in construction of Solomon’s temple).

To these five, we might add one last issue raised by lesser scholars, yet politically relevant:

- The Temple of Solomon (whether it ever existed).

While the synopsis in National Geographic gives a pro and con to the Biblical veracity on each of the five listed, we will go beyond that to discuss the arguments in a bit more depth, providing sources for those who wish to pursue further study. Our goal will be to first set out the Biblical account, and then consider the archaeological evidence and the conclusions of others. In this week’s phase of this lesson, we will consider the City of Two Gates.

### **The City of Two Gates (“Shaaraim”)**

Shaaraim is spoken of three times in the Old Testament. The key passage is 1 Samuel 17:52, in the story of David and Goliath. David slays Goliath and when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled. This battle took place in the Valley of Elah. The trail of carnage is noted in verse 52:

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, at 73, 75.

And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.

Earlier in the chapter, the battle is placed in clear geographic terms.

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them (1 Sam. 17:1-3).

Today, scholars can easily locate most every place mentioned. In fact, a quick tour in Israel under the care of Hal Ronning (greatest tour guide/biblical scholar east of the Atlantic!) will have one picking up rocks from the streambed between the mountains. The exception to knowing the locales in the Goliath story is the town of Shaaraim. Its location and existence has befuddled scholars for a long time.

Recently deceased Professor Anson Rainey was the principal author of the leading Atlas locating sites like these.<sup>14</sup> Rainey was Professor of Historical Geography at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. Walking through the geographical details of the account with thorough explanations of *how* we know what we know, Rainey wrote,

...the geographical details of the narrative...reflect a first-hand knowledge of the terrain.<sup>15</sup>

As to the identification and location of Shaaraim, however, Rainey's 2006 publication notes,

Shaaraim has not been identified but according to the list of towns in the northern Shephelah district (Josh 15:33-36), which has been shown to run clockwise, it comes after Azekah and is most likely somewhere between Azekah and Beth-shemesh.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rainey, Anson and Notley, R. Steven, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World*, (Carta 2006), at 12. This atlas is a first rate scholastic production by first-rate scholars. It is thoroughly footnoted and was brought up to date in 2006, timely in light of Rainey passing away February 2011.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* at 147.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*



One other insight we get from the Biblical reading is the name of Shaaraim. The name is the dual form of the noun meaning “gate.” In this form, the meaning of the name itself is “two gates.”

There is scant Biblical reference to Shaaraim. None of the passages seem to make any theological difference, absent some early church Alexandrian-esque allegorical reading. Yet from a “is the Bible authentic and reliable history?” perspective, the location provides ready fodder for the Biblical critic; hence, its inclusion in the National Geographic article.

From the perspective of the minimalist critic, Shaaraim produces a number of arguments against Scripture. Consider these arguments:

- There is no evidence of a town called Shaaraim.
- For that matter, there are no Judean towns anywhere in that region or time period that even had two gates (the meaning of “Shaaraim”).
- At most David was warlord, never “king.” He kept a rag tag band of followers who could not and did not have substantial towns or fortresses. Israelites were mountain villagers at best during the early Iron Age (1000BC).
- Writing was not common enough among the settling nomads now called “Israelites” to secure any type of record that would adequately convey accurate memories for later inclusion in a “Bible.”

Armed with this Biblical understanding and the assertions of critics, we look now to the archaeological evidence.

As stated earlier, Rainey noted that as of 2006, scholars were not able to identify Shaaraim among any ruins in Israel, especially in the region assigned to it by the David and Goliath story. That situation changed in 2008.

In 2008, at a site called “Khirbet Qeiyafa,” archaeologist Yosef Garfinkel conducted a limited six-week dig sponsored by the Institute of Archaeology at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This site has since revealed a great deal of evidence supporting the conclusion of Garfinkel and a number of other scholars that the ruins are those of the Biblical Shaaraim.<sup>17</sup>

There are multiple reasons for scholars to assign this ruin as Biblical Shaaraim. The evidence uncovered so far from the dig includes:

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<sup>17</sup> Garfinkel, Yosef and Ganor, Saar, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: Sha’arayim,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, Vol. 8, art. 22 (2008).

- The location is 2 kilometers east of the Biblical town Azekah and 2.5 kilometers northwest of Biblical Socoh. This is the area that would be expected for Shaaraim.
- The town has a gate that is “the most massive gate ever found in any biblical city to date.”<sup>18</sup> It is certainly one noteworthy feature of the town.
- The town has a second gate, and by definition is a town of “*shaaraim*” (“two gates”). This is unique. Garfinkel notes that this is “the only site in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel with two gates. Even cities three or four times its size, such as Lachish and Megiddo, have only a single gate.”<sup>19</sup>
- The ruins do not reflect many layers of settlement like Jericho and other such sites. This site reflects only a very limited single layer settlement from the Iron Age along with a brief thin layer of settlement dating much later in the Hellenistic (Greek) age. The Iron Age settlement is on bedrock, so it was not built upon an earlier site. Garfinkel notes this indicates “a single phase of Iron Age settlement lasting for a short period of time, probably not more than 20 years.”<sup>20</sup>
- There were four burnt olive pits that were sent to Oxford for radiocarbon dating. Those samples show it more likely than not that the settlement time for the site was between 1000 and 969 BC. Those dates fit into the time of King David, but are too early for King Solomon (who assumed the throne around 965 BC.)
- The pottery found on location also dates the site to the same time era (early Iron Age IIA).
- A most amazing find, which garnered a great deal of attention in the press, is the discovery of a pottery shard with writing in ink. The five-line writing is in an early Canaanite script, but the language is Hebrew, making this the earliest Hebrew inscription ever found.<sup>21</sup> Scholars differ over the exact

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* at 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, at 2.

<sup>21</sup> See, Shanks, Hershel, “Oldest Hebrew Inscription Discovered in Israelite Fort on Philistine Border,” *Biblical Archaeological Review*, March/April 2010 at 51ff.

The 4<sup>th</sup> line contains the Hebrew letters *m-l-k*. It is the word “king.”

translation of the five lines, but the mere presence of Hebrew writing at this early stage has radical implications for those who dismiss the idea of accurate Biblical reporting from that era.

- A “massive casemate city wall” made of megalithic stones surrounded the town (700 meters long and 4 meters wide). These stones frequently weighed four to five tons each, and the eastern gate has stones weighing ten tons each. “It was clearly a fortified town rather than a rural settlement.”<sup>22</sup> Garfinkel opines that,

The massive construction of the Khirbet Qeiyafa city wall, which required 200,000 tons of stone, and the massive eastern gate of the city with two stones of ca. 10 tons each, proclaim the power and authority of a centralized political organization, namely a state.<sup>23</sup>

Biblical Archaeology Review’s Editor Hershel Shanks offers a more biting assessment:

The circular casemate wall around the hilltop fort required more than 200,000 tons of boulders. Some of the megalithic ashlar in the city’s carefully designed four-chambered gates weigh almost 5 tons. Try lifting these. It took a well-organized, technologically proficient state society to construct something like this. This fort was not built by some tribal chiefdom. Qeiyafa is thus a powerful antidote to scholars like Tel Aviv University’s Israel Finkelstein, who claims that Judah never existed as a state in the tenth century and that the “kingdom” of David and Solomon was a tribal chiefdom at most.<sup>24</sup>

Garfinkel offers a compelling conclusion to his findings, asserting that contrary to the Biblical cynics:

The biblical text, the single-phase city at Khirbet Qeiyafa, and the radiometric dates each stand alone as significant evidence clearly indicating that the biblical tradition does bear authentic geographical memories from the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE Elah Valley. There is no ground for the assumption that these traditions were fabricated in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE or in the Hellenistic period.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* at 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> BAR at 51.

Furthermore, the five-line inscription uncovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa clearly indicates that writing was practiced in this region. Thus, historical memory could have been passed down for generations, until finally being summarized as the biblical text.<sup>25</sup>

### *Assessment*

If these ruins are in fact remnants of a Judean Fortress/town, whether they are Shaaraim or not, it denies the theory of Finkelstein and others. Finkelstein would have the world believe that in the tenth century BC there was no Judean civilization or culture advanced and organized enough to build such a structure. Finkelstein argues vociferously against the identification of this structure as Judean or Israelite, whether Shaaraim or not.

Finkelstein's defensiveness is readily apparent in the interview he gave to the National Geographic writer. The writer notes Finkelstein response with words like "venom," "mocking," and "snickering." The writer adds that Finkelstein's "many rebuttal papers and his sarcastic tone reflect that defensiveness, and his arguments at times seem a bit desperate."<sup>26</sup>

Setting his tone aside, we should still address Finkelstein's arguments. He asserts that Khirbet Qeiyafa was not Judean but reflects Philistine presence. Finkelstein presents no positive evidence from the dig to support his dig. He merely tries to refute the evidence contrary to his assertion. Garfinkel takes on Finkelstein with direct evidence:

- The arrangement of the walls with the abutment of private houses is not seen in Philistine society.
- There are hundreds of bones present reflecting the food of the community. The bones are all from cattle, goats, sheep, and fish (they are all *kosher*.) There are no remains from pigs, which was a staple of the Philistine diet.
- The pottery piece has writing that uses Semitic verbs in a way that is not found outside the Hebrew language.

Finkelstein admits that the absence of pig bones is "a gun, but not a smoking gun."<sup>27</sup> Finkelstein claims that the inscription must be from Gath (with no apparent explanation about why the inscription is using exclusively Hebrew

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, at 6.

<sup>26</sup> Girard at 87.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

verbs.) Finkelstein is particularly disturbed about the carbon 14 dating telling the National Geographic writer,

Look, you'll never catch me saying, 'I've found one olive pit at a stratum at Megiddo [a site where Finkelstein digs], and this olive pit—which goes against hundreds of carbon-14 determinations—is going to decide the fate of Western civilization.

Of course, one can readily see that Finkelstein is arguing for effect here rather than accuracy. On a factual level, his statement borders on nonsense. This is not “one olive pit,” it is four. Each one gives the same basic range of age for the site. Furthermore the aging is simply confirmation of what the pottery has indicated (which is the typical way for dating such finds). Also, the site was occupied only a short time, so we are not trying to decide if the olive pits came during one age of occupation or another. Still more, there are not “hundreds” of other carbon-14 results that argue against Garfinkel’s opinions. In fact, there are no other carbon-14 dates from this site even relevant to the issue. As we will see in a follow up lesson on the bronze mines also in the National Geographic article, there are more than a dozen other carbon-14 results that align perfectly with Garfinkel’s analysis of the time period.

In light of this we ask, are the ruins of Khirbet Qeiyafa the ruins of Biblical Shaaraim? We cannot know for certain at this point. But the current state of evidence certainly makes it more likely than not. Furthermore, the argument that there was no Hebrew literacy at the time of David, and that there was no adequate civilization and community for state-like construction of fortresses are simply not valid in light of the clearly dated affirmative findings of the City of Two Gates!

This is an ongoing dig, which is only 5 percent complete. Some students from archaeologist (and class reader) James Hoffmeier will be working at the dig this summer. This dig is one to continue to watch to see what further findings are made!

### POINTS FOR HOME

1. “*Lift up your heads, O Gates! That the king (מֶלֶךְ) of glory may come in.*” (Ps. 24:7).

David was not Israel’s true or highest king, even as he reigned over the people. David was a servant to Yahweh, the true King of kings. Psalm 24 is a Psalm of David. In it, he recites that the entire earth belongs to Yahweh, along with everything in the earth. It is Yahweh who made it, and Yahweh who reigns as King. Those who wish to ascend the hill of Yahweh and stand before him should have clean hands, a pure heart, with honesty in thought and deed.

Now that admonition has scared me in my life until I applied the righteousness of Christ to my sin and shortcomings. Armed with that righteousness, I am ready to proclaim with David, let the doors and gates be flung open and let the King of Glory, Yahweh, strong and mighty, Yahweh of hosts, enter! For as He is the world's King, he is also my King.

As you think on your Hebrew this week, acknowledge and serve the מלך of מלך's. He knows your name and has made the way for you to stand before him!

2. "*Shaaraim*" (1 Sam. 17:52).

For those of us who hold each word in Scripture dear, what do we do with a place like Shaaraim? What role does it have in Scripture? Is there a hidden meaning? Is there a special value to be unlocked by someone with the special key of knowledge? Or is this simply a reflection of God's word writing simple facts: as God worked in history, the Israelites beat Goliath and the Philistines in a battle and pursued them from Point A to Point B.

I suspect that this reflects accurate reporting of a day in the history of God's people. It was a day when the giant fears of Goliath and his people were routed from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. Yahweh started with a shepherd boy and five stones, and ended with a victory we can read of today.

If archaeologists were to look at our lives in 3000 years, then I suspect they would find many of the places and days missing from the "record." That does not mean, however, that God is not working. To the contrary, in unknown, maybe strange, yet very definite places, God works day by day with each of us. We all have places unknown to the world at large where we need God. In these places, we find God. Man may not always be able to locate the Shaaraims of this world, but God always knows where they are!

Give God your lesser-known places for him to work and win victories.

### **WANT MORE?**

Take your bookmarks handed out in class today and work on the letters to the alphabet. Practice saying them, reading them, and writing them. Then email us at [wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com](mailto:wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com) and tell us about your progress!