

Old Testament History, the Basics

Commentary for November 1, 2008 — Additional Evidence in Stone

The article this month by Dr. Ernest Martin is titled "The Basics of Old Testament History." It was put together from audio and written materials from 1986. Read the "[November 2008 Newsletter](#)" because it has additional information and perspective on Old Testament history.

In the article Dr. Martin explains why there are so few written records to corroborate the historical information in the Bible, when there should be many thousands of such records. This makes it difficult to "link" the biblical records with the writings of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and the other ancient nations. The reason is the destruction of literature and the records of those civilizations during the time of the "axial period" of Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and the Babylonian king Nebuchednazzar. The perishable written records were destroyed at that time.

Some records did survive that were written on less perishable materials. Those records do confirm information in Old Testament testimony in some particulars. Almost all are records written in stone. I tell of two such records, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser and the Sennacherib Prism in the November Newsletter. I will present others in additional material by Dr. Martin.

The Greek Christian Procopius of Caesarea served as legal advisor for Belisarius, the greatest general of the army for Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian I in the 6th century AD (about a century before Muhammad and the rise of Islam). Procopius wrote histories of his time, one in particular called *The Wars of Justinian*, Book III, *The Vandalic Wars*. In this work Procopius mentions a stone monument that he saw and he tells what was written upon it. First is information from material Dr. Martin wrote in 1986 that did not fit in the November article:



Where Did Joshua and David Drive the Canaanites and Philistines?

It may come as a surprise to many people but we have enough "rags and tatters" of history which have come down to us from before the 6th century BC to show the extent of Joshua's attacks against the Canaanites and later of David's activities to rid Palestine of the Philistines.

In the 6th century AD (after Christ), the Byzantine historian Procopius wrote of an inscription carved on two stone columns in Tingis (Tangiers in North Africa near the Straits of Gibraltar) which read: **"We are those who fled from before the face of Joshua the robber** [Joshua supposedly "robbed" them of their land], **the son of Nun."** Suidas later referred to the same inscription and recorded it as: **"We are the Canaanites whom Joshua the robber persecuted."**¹

In the Talmud are stories of how some Gergishites [who are Canaanites] in North Africa asked Alexander the Great to restore them to Palestine.² Not only that, there are hints in early history that Canaanites went into Asia Minor, Illyria, and even Italy (Mayani, *ibid.*). That they went into eastern Asia Minor can easily be understood. Though the Canaanites settled in central Palestine immediately after the Flood and gave their name to the land (for generations

1. Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars: Book III, The Vandalic War*, IV.10.13–22, Loeb Ed., H.B. Dewing translation (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), pp. 289, 291. Suidas was a 10th century Byzantine historian and lexicographer. See Suidas, *Lexicon*, "Canaan" (scroll down the page). *DWS*
2. The information about the Gergishites is in Zechariah Mayani's, *The Etruscans Speak*, trans. by Patrick Evans (London: Souvenir Press, 1962), p. 421. *ELM*

Palestine was known as the land of Canaan), most of the Canaanites were driven out by Joshua. Not only did they journey into North Africa, but some migrated all the way to Morocco, while many went into eastern Asia Minor. It seems that the Canaanites left their names on geographical locations where they settled, even in Palestine.³

There were hardly any original Canaanites left in Palestine or adjacent areas by the time of Solomon. The Phoenicians who settled in the old seacoast regions of the Canaanites, were not actual Canaanites. They may have been called "Canaanites" because they were now the possessors of early Canaanite territory, but they were not racial Canaanites. Even the Israelites came to be reckoned as "Canaanites" because they lived in the areas of the Canaanites who first settled Palestine after the Flood (Ezekiel 16:3, 45). But in no way can it be demonstrated that the Israelites and the Phoenicians of Solomon's time and onward were actual Canaanites.

In the time of the prophet Amos (8th century BC), the people of Tyre (Phoenicians) were reckoned as being in a "**brotherly covenant**" with Israel (Amos 1:9). They were Edomites, kin to Israel because one of the principal deities they worshipped was Ousoo, a clear take-off on Esau, another name for Edom. Thus, Hannibal in the late 3rd century BC, though a descendant of the Phoenicians of Tyre, and a Carthaginian general who almost conquered Rome, was not a Canaanite by race. You certainly could not call the Carthaginian Phoenicians the "**servant of servants**" as the Canaanites were prophesied to become (Genesis 9:25).

It was not only Joshua who drove out many indigenous races of Palestine. King David commanded Joab, the general of the army, to drive out many of the Philistines who lived in the coastal regions. The Book of Acts plainly states that the early nations of Palestine were forced out of the country "**unto the days of David**" (Acts 7:45). This is exactly what occurred. There are records and traditional stories from North Africa (though they represent just scraps of early historical information) which speak about Joab taking portions of the army of Israel and chasing Philistines out of Palestine into areas of North Africa.

Had not the thousands of literary works written by Solomon (1 Kings 4:32; Ecclesiastes 12:12) been destroyed during or just before the 6th century BC, and if the historical records of Gad and Nathan who wrote all about the reign of David (1 Chronicles 29:29) had survived, then people today would know for certain of Joab's exploits into North Africa. See "[The Basics of Old Testament History.](#)"

The following references represent some of the traditional history that many Jews, Arabs, and Berbers of North Africa have retained throughout the generations to show that the Canaanite people were driven out of Palestine during the reign of King David and even Israelites migrated into North Africa and Spain. Arab historians attribute the origin of the Berbers (who lived from Libya to Morocco) to the Philistines who fled to the African continent when David conquered their leader Djalud (Goliath). The identity of the name of the Palestinian city of Ghat ("Gath" in 1 Samuel chapter 7), the home of the giant Goliath, and the same name of cities in Tripoli and Morocco, clearly denote that the fugitive Philistines gave, as the custom was, the same name to these latter cities as the city of their origin was named.⁴

-
3. One principal Canaanite tribe was "the Hittites." The Assyrians and Babylonians as late as the 8th and 7th centuries BC called Syria (around Damascus) and Palestine by the name "Hatti." In the time of David and for two hundred years later, the area of eastern Asia Minor was known as the "Land of the Hittites" (1 Kings 10:29; 2 Kings 7:6). Historical investigations have shown that by the time of David the original "Land of the Hittites" in Asia Minor had been taken over by an Indo-European people and that these new invaders had driven out the original "Hittites" (Canaanites). See F.F. Bruce, "Hittites" in volume 2 of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, revised edition (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 720–723. DWS
 4. Abraham Isaac Laredo, *Bereberes y Hebreos en Marruecos* (Berbers and Hebrews in Morocco) (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1954), pp. 81–82. DWS

In the conduct of wars near the time of David when an army would penetrate into enemy territory or chase an enemy to a certain location, it was common to set up a stone marker showing this. Thus, the prophet Samuel **"took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, 'Up to here has YHWH helped us'"** (1 Samuel 7:12). Notice what the traditions say about certain stone markers found in areas of North Africa. They show a real similarity to the prevailing custom.

"Rabbi Joseph Schwarz in his book *Tebuat Ha-Arez* (Jerusalem, 1845) says:

According to the accounts of people of repute and worthy of all confidence, and who continually arrive from Morocco to Jerusalem, it is a certain and well known fact that near the region of Zagora, in the kingdom of Fez in Morocco there is an inscription in Ashurit letters, engraved on a stone tablet, which says: 'Up to here I, Joab, son of Zeruya, pursued the Philistines.'"

• Laredo, pp. 107–109

This was not the only inscription about this conquest by David's general. Nahum Slouschz says that the inhabitants of the island of Djerba and of Djebel Gharian in Tunis, also believe that their ancestors established themselves in Libya in the time of Solomon and preserve the remembrance of a stone tablet found in their territory with the inscription: **"Up to here came Joab, son of Zeruya"** (Laredo, p. 117).

In Morocco local Jews testified that the city of Hadjir Solaiman (Rock of Solomon) in the region of Dra'a was founded by Joab. This city derived its name from a stone tablet found there which read: **"Up to here Joab, General of the Army, pursued the Philistines."** (Laredo, p. 107).

In the 12th century Abraham Ibn David Ha-Levi of Toledo, Spain, in his *Sepher Ha-Qabblah* says the Berbers claimed to be descendants of the Philistines, who had been expelled from the Land of Canaan as a result of their wars with David and Joab. At the same period of time Abraham Ibn 'Ezra, explaining Daniel 7:4, says the Berbers are Philistines, who had established themselves there after the conquest of the country by Joshua. The Jews in Spain, at that time, as well as those in Morocco, in our time, use the term "Philistim" to distinguish the Berbers from the Arabs, whom they call Ishma'elim' (Laredo, pp. 70-71).

That many Jews followed Joab into North Africa (and even Spain) is well understood by Jewish traditional history in those areas. Even Procopius, the Byzantine historian, recorded that there was a synagogue in Boreium of Cirenaica (Libya) that dated to the time of Solomon.⁵ Indeed, there were so many Jews in Spain in the time of Solomon that the king sent his treasurer, Adoniram, to collect tribute from them (Laredo, p. 107). One of the generals in Amaziah's army (king of Judah about 825 BC) finally went to be with the Jews in Spain after his service career in Palestine was over and he was buried in Muriviedo (in the province of Valencia). On his tombstone, which was preserved for many generations, was inscribed: **"Lift up a lamentation with a bitter voice, for the great chief, whom Elohim hath taken away ... to Amaziah"** (Laredo, p. 109). This shows that the Western Mediterranean was well known by Israelites from the time of Joshua onward.

Why am I giving these traditional histories about Canaanites, Edomites, Philistines, and Jews moving into North Africa and Spain? It is to show that the majority of historical records written in the time of David and Solomon (and later periods up to the 6th century BC) were destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar, the **"head of gold,"** put an end to the civilizations of the past. The principal method to wean people from their past was to destroy their literature whether historical, philosophical, or religious. Thank God that Daniel was able to preserve some of Israel's early literature and that Ezra the priest finally canonized the essential parts to become our Old Testament. The parts that were retained in the Holy Scripture were those portions which the Father (YHWH) thought necessary to provide a standard document to give a reliable,

5. See Procopius, [The Buildings, VI.2.21](#). DWS

consecutive, yet partial account of history from the time of Adam to the time of Ezra in the 5th century BC. We must pay attention to the history given to us in the Old Testament if we *ever* hope to straighten out the histories of Egypt and Mesopotamia as well as other areas of the world. This is especially important for our understanding prophecy in our time.

When we take the Holy Scripture as the guide for all history before the 6th century BC, we pick up hints that King David's exploits were far more extensive than many scholars believe today. When we combine the information from scattered inscriptions in North Africa and Spain with the biblical accounts, we are given a much better comprehension of history and prophecy for our time.⁶ Most of the people of North Africa are not Arabs by race. They are the descendants of Philistines, Canaanites, some Edomites (and a minor mixture of European and indigenous African tribes). The comprehension of the history of North Africa (and other countries of the world) is essential for the understanding of prophecy today. ELM



Dr. Martin's narrative ends. Below is the full passage by Procopius' of ancient stone writing:

"And now, since the narration of the history has brought me to this point, it is necessary to tell from the beginning whence the nations of the Moors came to Libya and how they settled there.

When the Hebrews had withdrawn from Egypt and had come near the boundaries of Palestine, Moses, a wise man, who was their leader on the journey, died, and the leadership was passed on to Joshua, the son of Nun, who led this people into Palestine, and, by displaying a valour in war greater than that natural to a man, gained possession of the land. And after overthrowing all the nations he easily won the cities, and he seemed to be altogether invincible.

Now at that time the whole country along the sea from Sidon as far as the boundaries of Egypt was called Phoenicia. And one king in ancient times held sway over it, as is agreed by all who have written the earliest accounts of the Phoenicians. In that country here dwelt very populous tribes, the Gergesites and the Jebusites and some others with other names by which they are called in the history of the Hebrews.

Now when these nations saw that the invading general was an irresistible prodigy, they emigrated from their ancestral homes and made their way to Egypt, which adjoined their country. And finding there no place sufficient for them to dwell in, since there has been a great population in Aegypt from ancient times, they proceeded to Libya.

And they established numerous cities and took possession of the whole of Libya as far as the Pillars of Heracles, and there they have lived even up to my time, using the Phoenician tongue. They also built a fortress in Numidia, where now is the city called Tigisis [the city of Tangiers today]. In that place are two columns made of white stone near by the great spring [fountain], having Phoenician letters cut in them which say in the Phoenician tongue: "We are they who fled from before the face of Joshua, the robber, the son of Nun."

• *Procopius, The Vandalic War* ⁷

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com

-
6. When we realize that many of the Libyans in North Africa are really Philistines that David and Joab drove out of Palestine, it might explain why leaders in north Africa are so against Israel being in Palestine, though they live hundreds of miles away. Perhaps in their consciousness is the understanding that Palestine was once their land and they want it back, whether people realize it or not! *ELM*
 7. Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars: Book III, The Vandalic War*, IV.10.13–22, Loeb Ed., H.B. Dewing translation (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), pp. 289, 291.