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THE EXCAVATION AT TELL EL-FUL

With various interruptions the Director has continued into the summer the digging at Tell el-Ful. The work is now completed and he will report in full later. The nature of the excavator's work and its problems may be observed in some extracts in Dr. Albright's current letters.

August 2: "For a number of reasons I wished to work on the Tell during the summer and alone. In the first place conditions are climatically at their worst during midsummer. Tell el-Ful is so high (2700 feet) that it usually has a breeze, though the direct rays of the sun are very hot. Lately, however, we have had a west wind almost constantly, blowing a perfect gale much of the time, enveloping us with dust and burning our faces. In the second, I want to get fully acquainted with our fellah labor, without interference or interruption. I spend my whole time during working hours with the men, watching all operations and making sure that nothing escapes being recorded. I never sit down, but spend every minute with the laborers, either on the *rujm* or below it. When necessary I fall to with a pick myself."

August 16: "Our work will soon approach its end. I have had a comparatively large force, over fifty men and boys. The larger number can be handled, I find, as easily as the smaller, since the area is compact and much time is saved thereby. We have entirely cleared away the later fortress, and have cleared out the middle one, which exhibits a partial restoration. We are now laying bare the foundations of the middle fortress and tracing the walls of the lower one as far as possible without tearing down the middle one. The upper fortress was comparatively easy to distinguish, since it was built after the complete destruction of the middle one by fire, and shows a marked difference in the style of masonry. The middle one represents two partial restorations of the early structure, one being more complete than the other. Quantities of throwing stones, discovered in the debris of the early and the middle fortress, as well as around the outer edge of the revetment, show that the early one was destroyed by a hostile attack, and indicate that the burned fortress was subjected to the same fate."

September 5: "On September 2 I brought operations at Tell el-Ful temporarily to a close, though some more work must be done there. I shall wait for some time, until the rent has been fixed, and then, if there is enough left over, I shall dig a few days more. I would like to dig also in the tombs, but that must wait for a time. In my letter of August 16 I gave a tentative account of the outstanding results so far attained. On August 26 I wrote that the difficulties had been largely removed by further work, and that we had reached the rock inside the fortress at one point. The last week's work, in which I reached the rock at a number of other points, and cleared out one room entirely down to the rock, proved unexpectedly important, and brought a complete synthesis, which I have had the pleasure of demonstrating to a number of archaeologists.

"The fortress of Gibeah presents an exceedingly interesting study in architectural stratification. First comes a fortress built of massive stone blocks, rudely shaped. The pottery resembles late Canaanite rather closely, but shows unmistakable signs of later date. This fortress was completely destroyed by a fire, which is indicated by a layer of ashes about ten centimeters in thickness, between a meter and a meter and a half above the

rock. I have found this stratum of ashes at seven different points. Just above it are everywhere the foundations of the second fortress. The second fortress was the most elaborate and important of all, as well as being somewhat larger than the later ones. It was defended by a glacis and a massive outer wall about two meters thick. Among interesting architectural details are a remarkable series of niches in the wall, and a massive stone staircase, preserved for three steps. The pottery is characteristic of the early iron age, and contains numerous painted pieces, as well as some interesting incised fragments. A piece of an iron plowshare is the counterpart to a bronze arrow-head found in the first stratum. The second fortress was partly ruined and restored thereafter (2B). The third fortress, built on the ruins of the second, is characterized by a series of stone piers of a type common in the Jewish monarchy, and reminding one of the masonry of Ahab's palace in Samaria, though naturally much rougher. This fortress was also destroyed and restored once (3B). 3B was then completely destroyed after a short siege, indicated by numerous throwing stones and human skulls. Traces of the violent conflagration in which it perished were abundant. Finally, after the lapse of a period of time, a new fortress was erected on the little mound, showing both in its foundations and in its mode of architecture a complete break with the past. Late Jewish and Seleucid sherds showed that it belongs to the Maccabean period, a conclusion supported by the rude and wholly un-Hellenistic masonry. Before this fortress had been destroyed, but after it had ceased to have any military importance, houses were built around the base of the glacis, and grain-pits were dug. One large grain-pit or silo, nearly five meters long and two meters deep, was found in the excavations at the northern foot of the glacis. When the large stone was raised from its mouth, it proved to be entirely empty, except for a small amount of débris and four baskets of sherds, almost exclusively Seleucid. No pieces were later, and only three or four were earlier.

"These seven periods of building between 1200 B. C. and 70 A. D., make our mound a most interesting archaeological study. Owing to the comparatively small interval of time represented by the first three fortresses, to the frequency with which Gibeah is mentioned in the Bible, and to the pottery sequences, I think they can all be identified with fortresses mentioned or indicated in Holy Writ. The first, burned fortress may be identified certainly with the hold of Gibeah, which was destroyed by fire in the civil war between Israel and Benjamin (Jud. 20:40).

"The second fortress, the most elaborate of all, almost certainly dates from the time of Saul. Among the finds were fragments of bronze trinkets and an imported potsherd. It was partially restored after the collapse of the massive stone staircase, but then fell to ruin, evidently after the rise of the Davidic kingdom.

"The third fortress belongs to the Jewish royal period. Its pottery resembles closely that of Hielite Jericho. I would ascribe its foundation to Asa (1 Kings 15:22), but the combination depends upon the correctness of the identification of Mizpah with Nebi Samwil, for which strong new evidence will be adduced in the final publication. It was partly destroyed during the civil wars of the ninth and eighth century, and hastily restored. The restored fortress was burned by a hostile army, perhaps that of the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition, since Sennacherib advanced from the southwest. A full discussion of the facts and the probabilities will be given in the ANNUAL."