
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

who did not recognize themselves in the careless and unexpectant treasure-finder, but who could rejoice in the similitude of the merchant seeking goodly pearls—those who, like Peter and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee, had once journeyed from Galilee to the lower Jordan that they might learn more from John the Baptist of the laws and the promises of God, and who there found the Christ.

(*To be continued.*)

Samaria in Ahab's Time: Harvard Excavations and their Results.

By the Reverend J. W. Jack, M.A., Glenfarg.

The ancient town of Samaria lies immediately west of the modern village of Sebastîye. From the seventh year of Omri (*c.* 880), the kings of Israel had their chief palace there. The recent account by the Harvard University archæologists (G. A. Reisner, C. S. Fisher, and D. G. Lyon) of excavations on the site of this ancient capital,[1] together with comments by René Dussaud[2] and others, throw considerable light on the Israelite civilization at this early period. If Ps 45 be taken as presenting a picture of royal life and society in the first years of the Israelite monarchy, probably, as some think, in the time of Ahab[3] (*c.* 875–853), the excavations do nothing at least to weaken such a view. They give us a picture of the grandeur of Samaria, especially in his day, with its strong walls, its palaces, its temples, its private houses built with hewn stone (Am 5^{11}), its perfect organization, its riches, and its power. Renan has said that Ahab 'equalled Solomon in mental grasp and surpassed him in military valour.'[4] He certainly seems to have developed Israelite civilization.

The Harvard account affords confirmation of the Biblical fact (1 K 16^{24}) that the site was not inhabited before the time of Omri (*c.* 887). Excavations have been pushed to the ancient rock surface beneath. This surface, at its highest area (the Omri scarp), bears the channels and cup-marks common all over Palestine, and this must have been the condition of it when Omri bought the hill. No ceramic or other traces of habitation previous to Omri's date can be found: the only vestiges of occupation beyond the iron age belong to the neolithic period.

Only one gate into the town is mentioned in the Old Testament, and this has been found on the west, with traces of primitive fortification consisting in a tower or citadel, measuring 57·41 feet by 42·65 feet, of solid well-built masonry, which dates from the time of Omri. The bottom of this tower has been unearthed, sunk in a deep trench (over 16 feet deep at one part) in the rock. It was on the esplanade or open space in front of this that the famous council of war took place between Ahab and Jehoshaphat, when they decided to attack Ramoth-Gilead. The ancient defensive wall of the town, dating, it is thought, from Omri's time, must have been of massive construction. It has been uncovered only in two places, at the western gate and at one point towards the south where it is found to be about 10 feet thick, with bosses on all the outer stones. The ground slopes down considerably on the outside of the wall here, and to prevent the front of the latter from slipping down the cliff it has been placed over 3 feet back from the verge, and its foundations have been sunk about 6 feet deep into the rocky bottom. In this way the building of a formidable supporting glacis, such as existed at Megiddo, was avoided.

Omri's palace, the foundations of which have been excavated to the solid rock cut to receive them, is not a large one, and the material used for its construction is a poor quality of yellow limestone obtained from the site and the adjacent slopes, where a number of small quarries have been uncovered. It is composed of various halls abutting on open courts. Many of the exterior stones have

[1] *Harvard Excavations at Samaria* (1908–10). Harvard University Press, 1924.

[2] 'Samarie au temps d'Achab,' *Revue Syria*, 1926, pp. 314 ff.

[3] Renan, *Hist. du peuple d'Israël*, ii. pp. 263 ff.; *Syria*, 1925, p. 318.

[4] *Op. cit.*, ii. p. 301.

a heavy rough boss with a marginal dressing on the edges, like the rusticated work of the Petti Palace in Florence. This architectural device is found more commonly under Ahab, and really belongs to Palestine. Immediately to the west of this building and connected with it, Ahab erected his 'ivory palace' (1 K 22^{39}; cf. Ps 45^{8}), making Omri's structure the nucleus of it. This second palace, the foundations of which were also laid in rock cuttings, is far more extensive in plan and better constructed, showing a taste for architecture which was doubtless fostered by Tyrian influence. The palace is composed of three parts: first, the palace properly so-called; then a vast outer court, 104 yards long, enclosed by a heavy retaining wall over 6 feet thick, around which was a series of small rooms, serving no doubt as domestic offices, chariot houses, and stables; and lastly, a strong rectangular tower (41 feet by 52·49 feet) outside this court and guarding the entrance. For this new construction beautiful blocks of yellow limestone were used, a fact which has led Reisner to conclude that herein lies the origin of the term 'ivory palace.' But this term was applied rather to houses the rooms of which were panelled or decorated with ivory (cf. Am 3^{15}), as many rooms still are in Damascus and other cities of the East. The Egyptian and Babylonian monuments refer to the widespread trade in ivory, and Ahab must have had no difficulty in securing sufficient quantities of this material from Tyre, which was the principal centre of the trade (Ezk $27^{6.\ 15}$). An ivory box found at Enkomi in Cyprus, picturing a Syrian or Phœnician chariot, dates from this epoch.[1] In the courtyard of Ahab's palace the excavators discovered an ivory handle carved in the form of a winged Uræus, and an ivory dagger handle with the end shaped in the form of a snarling lion's head; and in early débris elsewhere they found fragments of ivory, including an object shaped like an Egyptian breast pendant, in the form of a Bes-head, with ornamental collar.

One of the most interesting parts of the building laid bare is the tower (אַרְמוֹן),[2] which stood in front of the entrance, and in which the royal guard generally lived so as to be near the palace without being inside it. It was in this very tower that king Pekahiah was assassinated by his chief officer, Pekah (2 K 15^{25}). In the days before Omri, when Tirzah was the capital of Israel, the royal palace there also possessed a protective tower or *armon* (1 K 16^{18}), and when Omri attacked the town, Zimri fled to this place of defence, set fire to it, and perished in the flames. Dussaud may be right in concluding that this fire was one of the reasons which, at a time when the Assyrian menace was becoming threatening, led Omri to found another capital, and it is not improbable that the *armon* at Samaria, ascribed by the excavators to Ahab, dates from Omri's reign, especially as it is only about ten yards from the latter's palace.

Within the great court of Ahab's palace, near the southern extremity of it, there are the remains of a fairly large building (82 feet by 36 feet), containing eighteen square rooms opening off corridors, which has apparently been the residence of the royal stewards, or at least magazines or storerooms for oil and wine brought to the palace as revenue, as the *ostraka* mentioning these products were found in it. This building, containing doubtless records and other valuable things also, was probably the place that Ben-Hadad II. was anxious to search in addition to Ahab's palace (1 K 20^{6}). At the north end of the court is a cemented pool or fish-pond (33·63 feet by 17 feet, but sometime later the size was lessened), about 20 inches deeper at the one end than the other, the bottom of which has a thick layer of greyish cement harder than the rock beneath. This pond must have served for watering the horses and for cleaning the chariots. We cannot help recalling the historic scene when Ahab, after being mortally wounded at the attack on Ramoth-Gilead, bled to death in his chariot, and his servants washed it along with his armour in the 'pool of Samaria' (1 K 22^{38}). After Ahab's death, other buildings with even better masonry, which are attributed tentatively by the excavators to Jeroboam II., including a great circular defensive tower (diameter about 33 feet inside) with walls over 7 feet thick, were added immediately beyond the court on the west side.

The excavations have unearthed a certain amount of Israelite pottery (*c.* 900–700) from the floor débris of the Ahab courtyard and the ground underneath. Most of this is ordinary wheel-made, though much of it is of a finer quality, and some of it is decorated with coloured bands or with incised pattern. Among other interesting objects discovered in the Israelite débris were open (or saucer) lamps with one or more spouts; large bowls of slate or black and white diorite; flints and stone implements evidently in use in the Israelite period long after the introduction of metal; small whorl-shaped objects with a narrow hole, supposed

[1] Dussaud, *Civilizations pré-helléniques*, 2e éd., fig. 199.

[2] 2 K 15^{25}; cf. Tirzah, 1 K 16^{18}.

by Macalister to be buttons; slabs and splinters of blue glass (raw material); iron arrow-heads (the only metal objects found in undisturbed Israelite ground); flat bone spatulæ or styli, rounded at one end and sharpened at the other, and supposed to be either for writing on wax or clay (as Macalister thinks), or for use in one of the common household industries (as Reisner suggests); Egyptian amulets and scarabs (including an Egyptian gold scarab ring, and an Assyrian clay letter-seal with the name of the addressee in cuneiform); club-shaped pendants of bone ornamented with dotted circles; crude figurines of females with tight-fitting robes; and numerous other things. Many of these objects were not confined, of course, to the Israelite débris, but were also found in some or all of the other periods. No pieces of Israelite sculpture of any sort were discovered.

The chief interest, however, of the excavations lies in the *ostraka* or potsherds, of which sixty-one are legible and contain Hebrew writing. These have been discovered in the 'storehouse' referred to, in the lowest part of the débris. The writing, which is beautifully traced with ordinary carbon ink by means of a reed pen,[1] and with wonderful regularity, not only gives us geographic and economic details, but reveals the nature of the ancient Israelitic alphabet in the time of Ahab, much earlier than the Zendjirli, the Baal-Lebanon, or the Moabite inscriptions. The *ostraka* were not intended to be permanent records, but were mere temporary notes, consisting of small accounts of oil and wine for the palace. For particularly important writings papyrus was the material employed, and judging from the 500 rolls of this which Wenamon took from Egypt to Byblos two centuries before Ahab, there must have been a considerable amount of it used. But for ordinary purposes, especially where economy was an element, *ostraka* (חֲרָשׂ) seem to have been the material, and not only Samaria but also Elephantine has furnished us with numerous specimens. They were usually broken to a suitable shape with a certain amount of skill, and the inscriptions were not written horizontally as jar labels were (always on the upper part of the jar), but at various angles, and the scribe was sometimes forced to split a word at the end of a line, so as to fit the potsherd. The excavators have had little difficulty in dating the Samaria ones. The words are separated by strokes or points, a distinction recognized as very ancient.

[1] On the process adopted, cf. Breasted, *American Journal of Semitic Languages*, xxxii. (1916), 230 ff.

The whole circumstances show that they date from the reign of Ahab, and this has been confirmed by the discovery in the same débris of fragments of a jar of Egyptian alabaster containing the name of Osorkon II. of Egypt (*c.* 874–856), a contemporary of Ahab. They are dated the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and thirteenth year (though no king's name is mentioned), and if the average of these dates be taken we may therefore fix them about the eleventh year, *i.e.* about 864, being at least twenty years earlier than the inscription of Moab (*c.* 842). We have already an Israelite seal dating from this period.[2] It is an intaglio found at Megiddo and bearing the epigraph: 'To Shema', servant of Jeroboam.'

The form of alphabet used is like that of the oldest known Israelite inscriptions, and an examination of it leads to several important conclusions. For one thing, the approximate date of the small agricultural plaque from Gezer, which Lidzbarski, Gray, and Ronzevalle have placed in the eighth century, if not in the ninth,[3] must now be fixed earlier, probably about 900.[4] If the characters on it be compared with the Phœnician ones at Byblos in the tenth century[5] and with those on the Samaria *ostraka*, they will be found to be intermediate between these two. The letters *ḥeth* (), *lamed* (), *mem* (), and *ṣade* () are similar to the Phœnician, but not so developed as the Samaria specimens of these. On the other hand, *yodh* () and *caph* () are identical with the Samaria characters, and they thus show progress beyond the Phœnician. It is therefore apparent that the Gezer plaque must be assigned to about 900 B.C., rather than later, as generally supposed, and this is also evident from its use of *vav* in place of the definite article (a matter to which we refer below). Seeing that some characters on the plaque exhibit slight changes from the Phœnician, it must have been at this time that the Hebrew writing showed a tendency to deviate from the latter, as it was probably at this time also—or a little before it, certainly not later—that the Greeks borrowed their alphabet from Phœnicia.[6] Thanks to our epigraphists we have now specimens of at least seven stages or 'landmarks' in the evolution of the ancient northern Semitic alphabet. It is now

[2] Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim*, i. p. 99.

[3] *P.E.F. Quarterly Statement*, 1909, pp. 26, 32, 112.

[4] Cf. Dussaud, *Syria*, 1926, pp. 327 f.

[5] For these (the Inscription of Abibaal, and that of Elibaal on bush of Osorkon I.) see Montet, *Revue Biblique*, July 1926, pp. 321 ff.

[6] Cf. *Syria*, 1924, p. 157, and 1925, p. 103.

generally agreed[1] that we must start, not from the Babylonian cuneiform writing or the Sumerian picture writing, nor from the Cyprian, Minoan, or Phæstos scripts, but from the Egyptian hieroglyphics.[2] This being so, we have (1) the Serâbît el-Khâdim inscriptions, in primitive Semitic characters, discovered by Petrie in the Sinaitic Peninsula, which were invented probably by the Hyksos (as Sethe has lately shown), and date from about 1900 B.C.; (2) the Phœnician, which we find several centuries later in Ahiram's tomb at Byblos about 1250,[3] and which has apparently developed from the former, as the southern Semitic has also probably done; (3) the inscriptions of Abibaal (*c.* 947) and of Elibaal (*c.* 925), both found at Byblos and exhibiting excellent specimens of the Phœnician alphabet; (4) the Gezer specimen, dating from about 900; (5) the Samaria *ostraka* (*c.* 864); (6) the inscription of Mesha on the Moabite stone (*c.* 842); and (7) the Siloam inscription, engraved in a recess of the Ophel tunnel (*c.* 700). After this late date we have numerous Israelite seals in hard stone, containing alphabetical characters.[4]

Another point worth noting, to which Dussaud and others have drawn attention, is the difference between the definite article in the Gezer plaque[5] and the Samaria *ostraka*. In the former *vav* is employed, as ירחו אסף ('month of the fruit-harvest'), ירחו לקש ('month of the after-grass'), etc., while in the latter we have *he*, as בשת התשעת ('in the ninth year'), היין ('the wine,' for הַיַּיִן), etc. The *vav* seems to show that the Hebrew language at the beginning of the ninth century was at least hesitating as to the notation to be adopted for the article (there was none in Phœnician writing), whereas about a quarter of a century later, judging from the *ostraka*, the choice had become definitely fixed on *he*. We know that originally *vav* was not a mere copulative conjunction but had binding force and was sometimes applied in this sense to denote juxtaposition or connexion.[6] This use of it, as Professor G. Hoffmann has pointed out, made the second noun definite, so that the *vav* easily took the value of the definite article, afterwards passing into *he* and being generalized and applied to independent words. The *vav*, therefore, in such an expression as ירחו אסף on the Gezer plaque is the so-called *vav compaginis* and must be read as יֶרַח הָאָסִף, 'month of the fruit-harvest.' We have some instances of this in the Old Testament, in poetic cases or elevated language, as in Gn 1^{24}, חַיְתוֹ־אֶרֶץ ('beast of the earth'), a form which is replaced in v.[25] by חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ (cf. also Ps 50^{10} 79^{2} $104^{11.\ 20}$, Is $56^{9.\ 9}$, Zeph 2^{14}), showing that both forms are syntactically alike. S. R. Driver takes the *vav* in such cases to be an old termination for the nominative singular,[7] but while this may have been one of the original uses of the letter, its replacement in v.[25] by *he* (inadvertently omitted by him in his quotation from this verse) shows that it had the determinative force to which we refer. In the Gezer inscription the *vav* is absent in those cases where the following noun could not have the definite article, except in one case (l. 7), where its absence is evidently due to the inexperience of the writer, who appears to have been a simple peasant.

These changes in Hebrew writing by the time of Ahab, including the deviations from the Phœnician, show considerable intellectual development. It is probable that the Israelites had been in possession of writing for many ages before this and had made constant use of it. David, we are told, wrote a letter to Joab, and there were certainly State annalists in his reign (2 S 8^{16} 20^{25}), and probably records going back to a remote period. Earlier still Samuel is said to have written a description of the first Israelite kingdom in a book (סֵפֶר). According to Hugo Winckler and others,[8] the Babylonian cuneiform was the official mode of writing in the two kingdoms up to the time of Hezekiah (*c.* 722), and certain Biblical terms have been interpreted accordingly. But there is no evidence for this. The cuneiform, which was better adapted than the Egyptian for writing Semitic, was certainly employed in Canaan in the fourteenth century as the diplomatic language, according to the Tell el-Amarna Letters, but the fact that some of its simplest expressions had to be explained by Canaanite glosses shows that it was not in common use. For everyday purposes it could have had no domination over the vernacular of the people,

[1] Alan H. Gardiner, in *Journal of Egypt. Archæology*, 1916, pp. 1 ff.

[2] As Lenormant first suggested, or from the Egyptian hieratics as his pupil De Rougé argued (*Mémoire sur l'origine de l'alphab. phen.*, 1874).

[3] Dussaud, 'Les Inscript. phén. du tombeau d'Ahiram,' *Syria*, v. pp. 135–137.

[4] A list of these is given in Dussaud, 'Samarie au temps d'Achab,' *Syria*, 1926, p. 334, footnotes.

[5] *P.E.F. Quarterly Statement*, 1909, pp. 27 ff.; Lidzbarski, *Ephem. für semit. Epigraphik*, iii. pp. 36 ff., 279 ff.

[6] Driver, *Hebrew Tenses*, 122.

[7] *The People and the Book*, p. 83.

[8] Winckler, *Altoriental. Forschungen*, iii. 1902, pp. 165 ff.; Benzinger, *Hebr. Archæol.*, 2nd ed. p. 176.

especially after the Israelites secured possession of the land. During the Israelite monarchy at least, Hebrew must have been the official mode of writing. The Israelites must have used it constantly for this purpose generations before Ahab. According to the discoveries of M. Montet at Byblos, the Phœnician alphabet, with which the ancient Hebrew one has such close affinities, was in a perfect condition by the thirteenth century, and must have been widely used even at that early epoch.[1]

One particularly interesting fact for the Biblical critic, pointed out by Reisner, is that out of twenty-one names of places mentioned on these *ostraka*, six are found in Numbers (26^{30-33}) and Joshua ($17^{2.3}$) as names of clans or tribal divisions in Manasseh. It may be that some of these names of towns and villages arose from the Manasseh clans having first colonized them, for many place-names in Palestine have arisen in a similar way. Seeing, however, that they were clearly in existence as localities as far back as Ahab's time (*c.* 875), the probability is that the redactor, who certainly lived after this time, took them to represent or to account for the clans. The six names referred to are Abi'ezer, Ḥeleq, Shekem, Shamida', No'a, and Ḥogla. As the first four have a masculine termination, and the remaining two a feminine one, he has included the former among the male descendants and the latter among the female. Thus, according to J's genealogy, the first four (along with other three, Asriel, Hepher, and Machir, doubtless towns also) are 'sons' of Manasseh; in P these four (along with Asriel and Hepher) are sons of Gilead, who is given as a grandson of Manasseh, while the two last (along with Maḥlah, Milcah, and Tirzah, towns also) are 'daughters' of Zelophehad, a grandson of Gilead. It is apparent that such genealogical schemes are different attempts to correlate and account for the names of the localities referred to. Long ago Kuenen pronounced Zelophehad's 'daughters' to be really towns, but it has been left to these *ostraka* to prove definitely not only this but that Manasseh's 'sons' are towns also. The incorrectness of the redactor is manifest from the mention of Shekem, which has been easily identified with the Biblical Shechem (Roman Neapolis, modern *Nāblus*). As this town is referred to in the papyrus Anastasi I. as far back as the XIXth Egyptian Dynasty (*c.* 1321–1210 B.C.),[2] and even in the Tell el-Amarna Letters (*c.* 1830),[3] it is clear that one cannot find in it the name of a son of Gilead; and it can hardly be doubted that the remaining names are not those of persons either, but of places, estates, or tribal districts.

The identification of several of the towns mentioned on the *ostraka* has been satisfactorily made by Reisner, Dussaud,[4] Abel,[5] and others. Only a few are unknown or doubtful. Of the six referred to above, Abi'ezer (which appears as 'Jeezer' in Nu 26^{30}, owing to the *beth* having disappeared) seems to be identical with the Abisaros of Josephus,[6] modern *Bisarîye*, a few miles north-west of Samaria (Guérin, ii. p. 214). It may be that the name Abi'ezer was applied to Ophrah, a town in which the Abiezrite clan was settled (Jg $6^{11.24}$), and which disappears from the Biblical records after Samuel's time. No'ah, which is probably the same as Ne'ah (Jos 19^{13}), is believed to be the New Testament Nain (Ναΐν; Lk 7^{11}), the modern *Nein*, placed by Eusebius and St. Jerome in the neighbourhood of Endor,[7] which belonged to Manasseh (Jos 17^{11}). Owing to the influence of the Greek pronunciation, the *'ain* has disappeared (though it remains in the Talmud, Na'im [8]), as it also has in 'Endor (modern *Endur*). Ḥogla, the writer would suggest, is probably identical with Beth-Ḥoglah (Jos 15^{6} 18^{19}), modern *Kasr Ḥadjlah*, south-east of Jericho, for this place, if not actually within Manasseh's territory (the boundary of which is nowhere precise), must have been only four or five miles beyond it, and may easily have belonged to this tribe. Ḥeleq and Shamida' have not been identified so far, though attempts have been made by scholars.

The *ostraka*, as already stated, contain notes or accounts of oil and wine received by the governors or stewards of the palace, evidently for royal purposes. They are really accompanying notes (similar to way-bills) sent with the oil or wine, and they naturally mention only the bare essentials. Thus, *ostrakon* No. 1 (from a fragment of a flaring bowl of reddish-brown ware) says: '*In the 10th year (sent) to Shemaryo from (the town of) Be'er-yam jar(s) of old (wine), (viz.) Rage' (son of)*[9] *Elisha'* 2, *'Uzza (son of)* . . . 1, *Eliba (son of)* . . . 1, *Ba'ala*

[1] Cf. Contenan, *La Civilization phénicienne*, 1926, p. 325.

[2] *Egyptian Hieratic Texts*, i. 1, *The Papyrus Anastasi I.*, by Alan H. Gardiner.

[3] Knudtzon, No. 289.

[4] 'Samarie au temps d'Achab,' in *Syria*, vii. pp. 9 ff.

[5] *Revue biblique*, 1911, pp. 290 ff.

[6] *Ant. Jud.*, VI. xiii. 8.

[7] *Onomasticon*, 94. 23, and 140. 3.

[8] Neubauer, *Géogr. du Talmud*, p. 188.

[9] The expression 'son of' is omitted on the *ostraka*, as generally in Arabic.

(*son of*) *Elisha*' (1), *Yeda'yo* (*son of*) . . . (1),' which means that Shemaryo, a royal steward, received contributions of wine from the town of Be'er-yam, and the names of the consigners are added, with the number of jars that each furnished. The word used for year is שׁת (instead of שׁנת), as in the Moabite inscription and the Neopunic ones. Again, No. 13 (from a jar of grey ware baked pinkish buff), as deciphered by Albright and Dussaud, says, '*In the year* 10 (*sent*) *from* (*the town of*) *Abi'ezer to Shemaryo a jar of old wine* (נבל ין ישן). *To Isha* (*a jar of old wine*) *from* (*the town of*) *Tetel.* Here Shemaryo and Isha (probably hypocoristic for Ish-Ba'al) are the names of royal stewards. A third example, No. 19 (from a similar piece of grey ware), says, '*In the year* 10 *from* (*the town of*) *Yaṣot a jar of fine oil* (נבל שמן רחץ) *to Ahino'am.*' A fourth example, No. 17 (written on a similar fragment), reads as follows: '*In the year* 10 (*sent*) *from Azzah to Gaddiyo a jar of fine oil* (נבל שמן רחץ).' In the two latter cases שמן רחץ probably means oil for anointing the body, corresponding to רֹאשִׁית שֶׁמֶן, 'choice oil,' which was used for this purpose (Am 6[6]). The regions around Samaria were noted for the purity of the oil which they produced, for Josephus tells us that vast sums of money were made by John of Gischala through selling the pure oil (ἔλαιον *καθαρόν*) of Galilee to the Jews of Cæsarea, who could not secure such oil there and would not be dependent on the Greeks.[1]

It was Solomon who first introduced an organized system of royal stewards, and the kings of Israel seem to have continued it or copied it. The *ostraka*, indeed, confirm the historical accuracy of 1 K 4, where we are informed that the upkeep of Solomon's house, his personnel, and his cavalry was attended to by twelve prefects or stewards (נִצָּבִים) whose names are given,[2] each of whom took his turn for a month at a time, securing the necessary supplies from a district allocated to him. These officers did not displace the tribal chiefs, but were merely purveyors or providers for the king, his *annonæ curatores*. The daily consumption was enormous (vv.[22. 23]), but the supplies were not all required for Jerusalem: some of them, destined for the horses and swift steeds, were brought to the place where the king happened to be (v.[28]), and there were also chariot and cavalry centres outside the capital (1 K 10[26]). The arrangements in the northern kingdom were probably based on those in Jerusalem. We read, for instance, of Obadiah, one of Ahab's stewards, searching during the famine for grass to keep the king's horses and mules alive. It is also recorded that Elah, who was king of Israel about twelve years before Ahab, was assassinated by Zimri, a cavalry officer, while he was intoxicated in the house of his steward, which goes to show that the latter had charge of the contributions of wine. The inscriptions on the *ostraka* thus seem to be in accord with the arrangements referred to in the Biblical history.

The inscriptions give us the names of royal stewards (the consignees), the districts under their charge, the consignments of oil and wine received, and in many cases the names of the consigners. The names of at least a dozen stewards are mentioned, and each one seems to have operated on a fixed district. The names of the stewards are: Ahino'am, Shemaryo[3] (=Shemariah), Gaddiyo (=Gaddiah or Gaddiel), Isha (son of) Aḥimelek, Ḥanan (son of) Ba'ara, Gamar (=Gomer), Yeda'yo (=Jedaiah), Ḥeleṣ, Bedyo (=Bedeiah), Ba'alzamar, Hannino'am, Aḥima. All of these except the last three are Biblical names, and Ba'alzamar is a known Phœnician name. Among the senders of contributions there are also many with Biblical names, such as Ahaz, Elisha', Meriba'al,[4] 'Abedyo (=Obadiah), Sheba', 'Uzza, Ela, Gera, Rafa, Nathan, and others, while some have Phœnician parallels. Judging from the numerous senders, the provisioning of Ahab's household, added to the cost of his superb 'ivory palace,' must have been a large burden on his subjects. With the help of Amos and contemporary history we can picture the social life that went on, especially in the royal household and among the upper classes. Under the influence of Jezebel, the halls of the extensive palace must have witnessed many a scene of luxury and extravagance.

Unfortunately, in spite of the valuable work of the Harvard archæologists, only a small part of the space within the walls of Samaria has been excavated. Searchers might yet light on the royal tombs, in which so many Israelite kings rest, or on the site of the temple of Melkarth, or on the ruins of the temple of Astarte, which was still in existence when the town was destroyed. For the magnificent work already accomplished, however, the Harvard excavators have earned the gratitude of all Biblical scholars.

[1] Joseph. *Life*, 13.

[2] 1 K 4[8ff.]. From vv.[8-14] the names of the stewards have lapsed, and 'son of' only remains.

[3] Such names on the *ostraka* end in יו instead of the Biblical יָהוּ or יָה.

[4] Meriba'al was the name of Jonathan's son, which the redactors changed to Mephibosheth (1 Ch 8[34]).