

Gilmore on the Philistines

On December 12, 1999 the Horn Archaeological Museum Lecture Series welcomed Garth Gilmore who has excavated in Turkey and more recently at Tel Miqne-Ekron and Ashkelon in Israel. His presentation was entitled, *The Archaeology of the Philistines, Iron Age I and II: National and Economic Revival Under Assyrian Domination*.

Dr. Gilmore identifies the origins of the Philistines with the Sea Peoples depicted on the Temple of Medinet Habu of Ramses III. This land and sea based migration of Aegean peoples (ca. 1175 B.C.), who clashed with the Egyptians is seen in the pictorial records on the wall of this temple. Eventually this group of people settled along the coastal regions of the Levant ranging from southern Phoenecia to the eastern Nile Delta. Their primary city states included Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Gath and Ekron. Here they contributed to the decline of the native Canaanite population during the early Iron Age and became known as the Philistines.

Excavations at Tel Miqne (Ekron) have demonstrated that the Philistines were a sophisticated and skilled people who originally brought with them their own cultural identity. This included their own religious traditions, metal working skills, textile industries and ceramic styles. Their early pottery style is referred to as Mycenaean III C1b (monochrome). Second generation Philistine bichrome ware pottery still showed a distinct resemblance to other Aegean cultures with large kraters and unique strainer jugs decorated with long necked bird and fish motifs.

When the Philistines arrived at Ekron they completely destroyed the town. A large destruction layer shows carbonized figs, jars that held oil, and other storage materials, but no human remains were found. After conquering the city it was

rebuilt and expanded to an area covering 64 acres. The fortifications included a huge wall that is approximately 7 meters wide and 6-9 meters high. The city plan was well laid out with merchant areas, domestic living areas divided by class, open areas for military and grazing purposes and a large palace. The industrial areas included kilns for pottery, textile materials and olive oil presses. Artifacts show great skill in metal working in both bronze and iron weapons and tools. Artisans also produced decorative and cultic items including, a small wheeled stand.

By the end of Iron Age I, the Philistines had begun to adapt to the local Canaanite culture. Ceramics began to show the influence of Egypt, Canaan and Assyria. From the second generation onward the Philistines interacted with the people that they settled near. Dr. Gilmore says, "this is an ongoing story with the Philistines, they assimilate, they enculturate and they absorb elements of the culture around them." Eventually these adaptations resulted in a loss of identity. Thus, began a decline for the Philistines in Ekron.

The Assyrians made most of the Philistine cities into vassal states. Ekron was chosen to be a producer of olive oil and textiles. A typical olive oil facility found at Tel Miqne included three rooms: an entrance room, a factory area with a press, a mixing and a storage area. Currently, at least 115 oil facilities have been found though only 4% of Ekron has been excavated. Dr. Gilmore estimates that this site produced between 500-1000 tons of olive oil per year amounting to approximately 295,000 gallons.

In the center of Ekron was its administrative center and palace. It consisted of a large building with 1 meter thick walls and a 4 meter long threshold entrance. The floors and walls were covered with thick plaster and decorative frescos. Its colonnaded courtyard had a room that was set aside for ritual purposes and contained an altar. One inscription found in this area says, "to Asherah," a deity mentioned in the Bible and worshiped at the

shrine along with other Assyrian and Philistine gods. Another room contained an olive press and basins probably used for the administrative building and palace in the 7th century B.C.

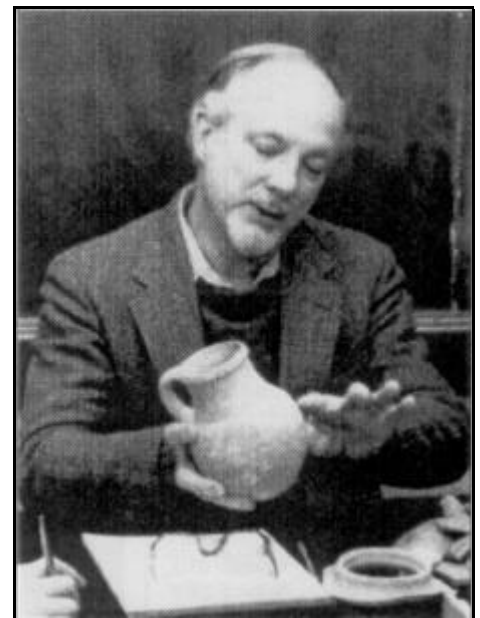
The most remarkable inscription found at Tel Miqne in this administrative and palace complex was found near the shrine. This complete inscription consists of four lines with one word on the fifth line. It identifies a dynasty of kings that ruled in Ekron. This dynasty began with Achish who describes himself as the king of Ekron who dedicated the shrine to the currently unknown goddess Patgiah. The inscription identifies Achish as the son of Padi who was king of Ekron during the time of Hezekiah. It also mentions the names of three other kings before him. This discovery along with other inscriptions confirm Tel Miqne as the site of biblical Ekron.

Ekron was later destroyed by Babylon in 603 B.C. (Robert D. Bates)



Dever on David

William G. Dever presented a lecture for the Horn Archaeological Museum Lecture Series on November 14, 1999 entitled "Fading Glory?: The Recent



Dever pottery seminar at AU in 1988.

Controversy Over Israel's Davidic Monarchy."

As he has argued more extensively in several recent publications, Dever's focus was to understand the position of the so-called Copenhagen School of "Revisionists" and to meet it head on with archaeological evidence which this school of interpretation seems to ignore.

According to Dever, this school, like all post-modernists, view theories of knowledge as illusions; treat authority (especially that which is based on ancient texts) with contempt; advocate multiculturalism; reject traditions; and view history as mere propaganda or politics. Hence, the Hebrew Bible is said to have been written in the Hellenistic period; it is a forgery, e.g., there was no United Monarchy, but merely a number of petty chiefdoms and there was no monotheistic

religion among a people who lived during the Iron Age because this was invented after the fact as part of Jewish propaganda. Some take this even farther, and basing their presuppositions on modern political concerns, consider the Bible to be the original Zionist Myth. Finally, all claims to knowledge are only social constructs. In order to get behind a construct one must deconstruct or tear it down. The presuppositions behind this are that all readings of a text are political; there are no correct interpretations of texts; texts cannot be understood; and texts (in this case the Bible) must be read as literature, ultimately leaving nothing ... no history and definitely no ancient Israel.

This school tends to ignore or treat with minimal interest the evidence from archaeology. Dever poses the question: does a construct of knowledge approach

reality? He suggests that texts should be studied and although there is no perfect, objective history, a honest history is possible. History writing is the way people give account of themselves. Dever pointed out, for example, that if the Bible were really written in the Hellenistic period, coins, which were introduced for the first time during the Persian period, would be mentioned instead of weights as in the Iron Age. An example of such a weight is found in 1 Sam 13:21, where the term "pim," a weight only used during the Iron Age, is mentioned. Both archaeology (e.g., over 300 Iron Age sites) and extra-biblical texts (e.g., king lists) support the biblical story. Details such as these would suggest that Bible has much to say of historical value. (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)

