

## 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 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

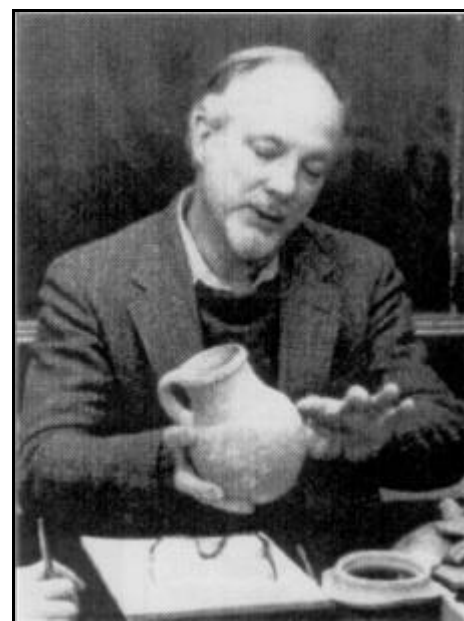
The most remarkable inscription found at Tel Miqne in this administrative and palace complex was found near the shrine. This complete inscription consists of four lines with one word on the fifth line. It identifies a dynasty of kings that ruled in Ekron. This dynasty began with Achish who describes 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.