

Archaeology and the Bible

by Randall Price

At the beginning of the Easter week Jesus rode a donkey down from the Mount of Olives toward the great rock-built walls of the city of Jerusalem. His journey that day had been long ago predicted by the prophet Zechariah who had told the Jewish People to expect their Messiah to come to them in this humble way (Zechariah 9:9). While crowds of palm-waving Jews rejoiced at His “triumphal entry,” the religious establishment demanded that he silence these newfound disciples. But Jesus responded, “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!” (Luke 19:40). Jesus’ words perhaps referenced the huge stone blocks that surrounded Him at every turn in the Holy City. Today, even though disciples multiplied by millions still rejoice over Him, the stones have also added their voice. In fact, the very stones of which Jesus spoke today have been unearthed at the foot of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Fulfilling Jesus own prophecy that they would fall (Luke 19:43-44), they still cry out to our age that the triumph of that first Easter continues still. Such stones are part of the historic witness of archaeology, a science that has come to the service of Scripture at a time when other sciences have sought to subvert it.

We live in an exciting time! New discoveries are being unearthed throughout the world often faster than our newspapers can report them. They open a new window on the ancient world that permits us to view the stories of the Bible with an accuracy never known before. The first generation of Jewish-Christians who were bequeathed the Gospels no doubt had such a first-hand experience of the history and places they describe. Until the advent of archaeology, Christians were left to reconstruct the world of the Bible and the drama of the events of Easter as best they could. Masterpieces of religious art from previous centuries pictured the crucifixion, entombment and resurrection of Christ with the only reference point they had - their own world. Even if they included Oriental models, the look was still more that of seventeenth-century turbaned Turks rather than first-century Jews and Romans. While not detracting from the drama, and certainly with every good intention toward history, such scenes nevertheless portrayed an unrealistic image that was more faith than fact. Today, archaeology has restored much of the first-century world, enabling us to experience the reality of Easter in a way not available to previous centuries of Christians.

In the late 18th century, no one could have dreamed what wonders archaeology was to reveal. The world of the past was itself a dream, forgotten except for the Bible’s parade of ancient names and places. However, the Bible stood as the only surviving testimony to itself. The reader was the blessed by its truths, yet often left baffled by the sites and subjects it recorded. Archaeology has reclaimed mankind’s lost heritage, chasing away the spiders of time whose webs of ruin have hidden our past from us. It has resurrected the faded glory of forgotten eras so that future generations can approach their faith with greater facts than any other in history. In many cases it has also chased away skeptical views of the Bible introduced to our Christian culture by the invasion of biblical higher criticism over a century ago. No longer can the Bible be thought to have been the late product of fanciful Hebrew editors seeking to create a religious history for a race without origins. Rather, as Professor William Foxwell Albright, the renown Dean of American biblical archaeology professed decades ago: "Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition of the value of the Bible as a source of history." As a result, archaeology has been of special importance to those who seek to capture the original context of scripture. In this regard, Joseph Callaway once observed: “The real business of archaeology is to establish factual benchmarks in the world of the Bible to guide interpreters.”

The Purposes of Archaeology

Archaeology has revealed the cities, the palaces, the temples, the houses of those who lived shoulder to shoulder with those whose names were inscribed in scripture. It makes possible for us what the apostle John once voiced to authenticity his message: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life" (1 John 1:1). Tangible things assist faith in its growth toward God. Archaeology brings forth the tangible things of history so that faith can have a reasonable context in which to develop. It also keeps faith in balance with facts, confirming the reality of the people and events of the Bible so that skeptics and saints alike might clearly perceive its spiritual message within an historical context. Many people wrongly assume that the purpose of archaeology is to "prove" the Bible. However, since the Bible describes itself as the "Word of God," it cannot be proved or disproved by archaeology anymore than God Himself is subject to the limited evidence of this world. The proper use of archaeology in relation to the Bible is to confirm, correct, clarify, and complement its theological message.

Confirming the Word of the Bible

According to Webster's English Dictionary one of the meanings of the word "confirm" is "to give new assurance of the validity" of something. Archaeology provides us new assurance from the stones to accompany the assurance we already have from the Spirit. For instance, a little more than 100 years ago higher critical scholars doubted the existence of the Hittites, a people mentioned 47 times in the Old Testament and among whose ranks were Ephron the Hittite, who sold Abraham his burial cave (Genesis 23:10-20), and Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon (2 Samuel 11). Then in 1876 the ruins of the Hittite empire were discovered at Boghaz-Koy with more than 10,000 clay tablets chronicling their history. Archaeology has produced the same confirmation of the historical sites of Nineveh, Babylon, and countless lost cities in Israel and Jordan. Such confirmation is constantly occurring with new archaeological excavations. Until recently there was no material evidence from the archaeological record to confirm the biblical account of the existence of a biblical King David. That changed in 1993-1994 when Professor Avraham Biran unearthed a monumental inscription in the northern Israelite city of Dan. The inscription, written by one of Israel's ancient enemies (so no Israelite can be accused of fabricating it) recorded the name of one of Judah's kings "of the house of David." These tell-tale words give new assurance of scripture's most famous warrior and psalmist, since if there was a "house of David" there had to be a David to have a house! In like manner, only a few years ago a startling confirmation of one of the biblical prophets was discovered. The Bible tells us that the Prophet Jeremiah, who stood against an ungodly empire in the last days of Judah's history, had an associate named Baruch who served as his scribe. The biblical book of Jeremiah, once burned by a rebellious king, was personally written by the hand of this Baruch. In excavations in the ancient City of David more than 50 clay seals were discovered, preserved by the fire that had destroyed the city according to Jeremiah's prophecy. One of the seals from this site, once used to seal an ancient papyrus document, contained the name of Jeremiah's scribe Baruch. More astonishing, on the upper left corner of the seal is the imprint of Baruch's own finger, made in the soft clay the day his letter was sealed and baked by the fire to a hardness that protected it against time. Here, then, is the very fingerprint of a man who wrote one of the books of the Bible and served at the side of one of Israel's great prophetic figures.

Correcting our Wording of the Bible

One of the first steps in the understanding of the scriptures is to discern the text as originally written by its authors. While it is unlikely that archaeologists will ever dig up one of the autographs (original texts of the Bible), the ancient copies that have come to us have been preserved and passed down to us in such a manner as to give us confidence that we have the very “Word of God” in our hands. From the sands of Egypt to the caves of Qumran, archaeology has unearthed hundreds of copies of Old Testament books and thousands of copies of the New Testament books. In the first category are hundreds of Hebrew, Aramaic inscriptions which contain vocabulary familiar to the Old Testament. Our oldest copy of a biblical text comes from an inscription discovered only in 1979 by Israeli archaeologist Gabriel Barcay in a tomb in Jerusalem’s Hinnom Valley. Among the more than 1,000 objects taken from the tomb were several tiny silver scrolls dating from before the Judean exile of 586 B.C. One contained the complete text of the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24-26. This text showed scholars how well our later versions of the Bible preserved this important biblical blessing as well as forced a re-evaluation of the old higher critical theory that the authorship of most of the Pentateuch had only taken place after the Judeans return from exile. One of the greatest manuscript discoveries of all time has been the fabulous Dead Sea Scrolls. Included in this collection of 1,100 documents are 233 whole or fragmentary copies of every book of the Old Testament (except the book of Esther), most written at least a hundred years before the birth of Christ. Yet, even greater than our discovery of these Old Testament documents are those for the New Testament. Some 14,000 whole or partial copies are now available to scholars. To this we can add the sensational discoveries of ancient manuscripts in Nag Hammadi which contain Gnostic gospels and texts as well as thousands of newly recovered texts long lost in Saint Catherine’s monastery at the foot of traditional Mt. Sinai. These ancient manuscripts provide the basis for restoring the precise form, grammar, and syntax of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words of the Bible, as well as their exact meaning in the time in which they were written. Such archaeological literary treasures have given us a far greater collection of biblical manuscripts than that possessed by the Church in previous centuries and have enabled scholars to make better translations from the ancient languages, thus improving our own English language versions of the Bible.

Clarifying the World of the Bible

Since the “Word” was announced to people in this world, at particular places and times, the historical, cultural, and religious context of those addressed must be understood. However, we in the United States are 8,000 miles and some 4,000 years removed from such times and places. Therefore, the better we are able to understand the original meaning of the message, as first communicated in the ancient world of the Bible, the better we will be able to apply its timeless truths to our lives in the modern world. Professor Amihai Mazar, director of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem’s Institute of Archaeology explains the importance of this when he says: “archaeology is our only source of information that comes directly from the biblical period itself ... a whole picture of daily life from this period... which is the only ... evidence that we have from the biblical period except the Bible itself ... We can now imagine the size and type of settlements people lived in, what type of town plan there was, what kind of vessels they used in every day life, what kind of enemies they had and what kind of weapons they used against these enemies - everything related to the material aspect of life in the Old Testament period can be described by archeological finds from this particular period.” All of these archaeological details assists us in our reconstructing this original context of the Bible so that the theological truth it contains will not be misinterpreted and misapplied. The monumental excavations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Israel have now revealed much of the shape and substance of these long buried empires. Based on paintings from Egyptian tombs and reliefs on their temples we know what the biblical patriarchs may have looked like as well as many of the foreign armies that attacked both Egypt and ancient Israel throughout its history. We even have in some instances stone “snapshots” of actual biblical

personalities. From the high cliffs of Behistun we have the portrait of the Persian monarch Darius the Great, from an Assyrian obelisk a picture of the Judean King Jehu, and from Israel a painted image of an enthroned King Hezekiah. Such archaeological trivia has made possible the wonderfully accurate recreations of these ancient civilizations in television documentaries and feature films.

Complementing the Witness of the Bible

The 66 books of the Bible were written on at least five continents over 4,000 years of history by prophets, poets and peasants as well as by shepherds and statesmen. While a vast and diverse witness, the scriptures only mention certain people and record specific events that were necessary to their larger theological purpose. As a consequence, much of significance is deliberately excluded that truths of a greater importance might be included. However, such necessary deletions cause some to question the historical accuracy of the biblical authors. Archaeology through its revelation of the context and culture of the lands and civilizations in which the biblical drama was enacted, adds a complementary witness as fills out the outline drawn by the biblical authors verifying that the particulars they present they faithful to the facts. For example, although the Israelite King Omri who built up Samaria and made it the capital of the Northern Kingdom, was one of the most important rulers of his time (885-874 B.C.), the biblical text gives him only a passing reference (1 Kings 16:21-28). This was most likely because he was one of the most wicked of the Israelite kings and his prideful accomplishments did not deserve recognition. Archaeology complements the biblical notice of King Omri by providing the historical background for his extra-biblical exploits from the recovered records of his foreign foes. It reveals that the biblical authors are correct in their assessment of his character and command. This complementary witness has been especially helpful in understanding the time of Jesus and the correctness and context of His commentary on and extensive dialogues with the various Jewish religious sects. The problem for interpreters until recent times was that while such groups as the Pharisees and Sadducees were well known from the Gospels, no contemporary witness to them was known to have been preserved. However, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered and studied it was found that they were filled with numerous descriptions and accounts of these Jewish sects, with whom the Community that hid the scrolls also had controversy. Students of the Gospels now have the advantage of reading complementary commentary on these groups from before the birth of Christ, yet employing the similar strong statements reminiscent of Jesus. In this light, archaeology has also given us countless complementary texts, such as accounts of Creation and Flood which parallel the scriptural stories, demonstrating the trustworthiness of Bible. These not only reveal the Bible's historical character, but emphasize its uniqueness when compared with other ancient Near Eastern documents. In this regard the discoveries of the religious literatures of the Sumerians, Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians and Canaanites have all highlighted the originality and theological distinctiveness of the Bible.

Archaeology and Easter

When we come to the life-changing message of Easter, with its account of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, archaeology again confirms that even though miracles are involved they are being enacted in the arena of actual history. This is important for Christians on two counts. First, our stories of the season, preached with passion in Easter services and performed with pageantry in Easter productions, may connote an air of unreality. As with any truth that has become tradition we can lose the sense of its original setting in this world and feel it belongs to some other. Such a loss of connection with the real world context of Christianity - and especially of the defining facts of our faith - imperils our practice of the real significance of the season, namely our personal salvation provided at the cross and of resurrection life and the future hope of our own bodily resurrection. Archaeology transforms our flannelgraph conceptions of Jesus in pressed linen walking on carpet grass and it replaces it with a real figure from a real world that calls

for real faith. As archaeology rightly informs our understanding of the events of Easter, it does not diminish the miracle of the message but increases our faith in its historical fulfillment.

A second concern for archaeology's importance to Easter grows out the first and relates to the problem of the present postmodern concept of Christianity as an experience transcending history. This is well expressed by Marcus Borg, Oregon State University professor and Chairman of the Jesus Seminar: "The truth of Easter does not depend on whether there really was an empty tomb ... It is because Jesus is known as a living reality that we take Easter stories seriously, not the other way around. And taking them seriously need not mean taking them literally." However, archaeological excavations (see sidebars) have given sufficient evidence that there is every reason to take the Easter stories both seriously and literally.

Touching the Tomb of Jesus

The most serious events of the Easter story are centered around the burial and resurrection of Jesus. Archaeology has revealed many first-century Judean tombs which correspond in type to the Gospels' description of the tomb of Jesus. However, is it possible to identify the actual tomb in Jerusalem recorded in these accounts? Christian tourists most favor the Protestant site known as "the Garden Tomb" discovered in 1883 by the British officer Charles Gordon. Here in a serene setting outside the present -day walls of Jerusalem can be found a weathered tomb situated next to a deeply eroded limestone hill which Gordon identified as "Skull Hill" (now known as "Gordon's Calvary"). However, archaeological examination of the site by Jerusalem archaeologists Gabriel Barkay and Amos Kloner have shown that the Garden Tomb is part of a system of Iron Age II type tombs in the area all dating from the First Temple period (8th-7th centuries B.C.). The most prominent of these tombs are located next door to the Garden Tomb on the property of the French School of Archaeology, the École Biblique. Since the New Testament says that Jesus was buried in "a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid" (John 19:41), the Garden Tomb, already some 800 years in the time of Jesus, cannot meet the Gospel's explicit criteria.

However, the traditional site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which has a history going back at least to the fourth century A.D., based on its description in Byzantine sources and the existence of columns still in use today from the church of Constantine the Great, has significant archaeological support. Although today it is located within the present walls of the Old City, and the Gospels specify that Jesus was crucified "outside the walls" (John 19:20; Hebrews 13:11-12), the modern walls do not follow the ancient course. This was proven in the late 1960's when British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon discovered that the wall now enclosing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was a "Second Wall" constructed *after* the time of Jesus (about A.D. 41). Therefore, when Jesus was crucified the site would have been outside the earlier "First Wall." Furthermore, in 1976 Israeli archaeologist Magen Broshi uncovered a portion of the original Herodian wall in the northeast section of the church. This revealed that the area upon which the church is built was just outside the western wall of the city on the line of the First Wall. In addition, other archaeologists have discovered that a "Garden Gate" was on this wall, a fact which agrees with the Gospel's mention of a garden in this area. Examination of the tombs in the vicinity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre confirm that they are from the late Second Temple period (first century A.D.), the very time in which Jesus would have lived. The type of tomb also matches the precise type of tomb in which Jesus was laid. In the first century two types of tombs were in use. One was the more common *kokim* tomb which employed long narrow niches cut into the chamber of the burial cave walls at right angles. The other known as *thearcosolia* tomb had shallow benches cut parallel to the wall of the chamber with an arch-shaped top over the recess. These type of tombs were reserved for those of wealth and high rank. This seems to be the type of tomb in which Jesus was laid because Jesus tomb was said to be a wealthy man's tomb (Matthew 27:57; cf. Isaiah 53:9), the body could be seen by the disciples as laid out (something only possible with a bench cut tomb), John 20:5, 11, and the

angels were seen sitting at both His head and feet (John 20:12). The "Tomb of Jesus" at the traditional site, though deformed by centuries of devoted pilgrims, is clearly composed of an antechamber and a rock-cut *arcosolium*..

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre also encloses a portion of a hill thought to be the true site of Calvary. Excavations to expose more of this rock have revealed that it was a rejected portion of a pre-exilic white stone quarry, as evidenced by Iron Age II pottery at the site. In this light, if this is the actual site it has been suggested that Peter's citation of Psalm 118:22: "The stone which the builders rejected ..." may have a double meaning (see Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7). By the first century B.C. this rejected quarry had made the transition from a refuse dump to a burial site. It also gives evidence that it was located near a public road in Jesus' time, another factor which helps to qualify it as the authentic site since the Gospels record that those passing by the place where Jesus' cross was situated were able to mock Him (see Matthew 27:39). The nature of the rock site fits both the Jewish and Roman requirements as an execution site and it may be because of its association with a place of death that it was called in Jesus' time the "place of the skull." This rock upon which the Church was built can still be seen in part today through a section preserved for viewing which bears evidence of earthquake activity, a fact which accords with the Gospel story (Matthew 27:51).

Excavations conducted in the late 1970's at the site revealed further evidence for this being the place where the original Easter drama was performed. In the lower sections of the Church were discovered the foundations of the Roman emperor Hadrian's "Forum," in which his Temple of Aphrodite had been erected around A.D.135. Hadrian followed Roman custom in building pagan temples and shrines to supercede earlier religious structures. This was done at the site of the Jewish Temple, located not far from the Holy Sepulchre Church, and the fourth century church historian and Bishop of Caesarea Eusebius confirms that it was also done in this case: "Hadrian built a huge rectangular platform over this quarry, concealing the holy cave beneath this massive mound." If the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the actual site venerated by Christians as the tomb of Jesus, it would explain this location for the Roman building.

Final Thoughts

When the disciples first came to the tomb on that first Easter morning, the Gospels record: "the body of Jesus they did not find." In the same manner down through the ages skeptics and critics have also come, whether literally or figuratively, and the verdict of history has remained the same as in ancient times - "His body they did not find." In the final analysis, archaeology may bring us to the tomb, but only faith - informed by the facts - can bring us to Christ. Yet, because archaeology has shown us that the facts that support faith are accurate - an identifiable tomb attesting to literal events - our faith in the Christ of history *does* depend upon an historically empty tomb for its reality. Archaeology has revealed the persons (Caiaphas, Pilate) and events (crucifixion, entombment) which make up the story of Easter. The resurrection is interwoven with these facts so as to command the same consideration. And when considered along with the historical, social and psychological facts of the first century that surround the claim that Christ arose, the stones still cry out concerning Him Who was and is and is to come!

Side Bar #1: Caiaphas - No Bones of Contention

One of the prominent figures in the Easter story is the Jewish High Priest Caiaphas. From A.D. 18-36 he served as the leader of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council responsible for legal affairs in Jesus' day. It was Caiaphas who prophesied that Jesus would die for the Nation and set in motion the plan to kill Him (John 11:49-53; 18:14). And it was Caiaphas who presided over the late night trial at which Jesus confessed Himself to be the Messiah and was subsequently condemned (Matthew 26:57-68). It was also in the courtyard of Caiaphas' house that Peter waited for word about Jesus, but instead betrayed Him three times as the cock crowed (Matthew 26:69-75). Today, thanks to archaeology, almost 2,000 years after his death, Caiaphas has made a reappearance in Jerusalem. His physical remains were discovered accidentally in November of 1990 by construction workers who were beginning construction for a new park in Jerusalem's Peace Forest just south of the Temple Mount. As the work crew was digging, the ground suddenly collapsed exposing a first-century burial chamber with 12 limestone ossuaries (burial boxes). One exquisitely ornate ossuary, decorated with incised rosettes, obviously belonged to a wealthy or high-ranking patron who could afford such a box. On this box, however, was also an inscription. It read in two places: *Qafa* and *Yehosef bar Qayafa* ("Caiaphas," "Joseph, son of Caiaphas"). The New Testament refers to him only as Caiaphas, but the first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus gives his full name as "Joseph who was called Caiaphas of the high priesthood." Inside were the bones of six different people, including those of a 60-year old man. At the time of the discovery Steven Feldman, associate editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review* observed: "the find should be particularly exciting to some believing Christians because to them it may bolster the Bible's accuracy ..." Indeed it does.

Side Bar #2: Pontius Pilate - Evidence that Demands a Verdict

During the Easter Passion perhaps no person is more memorable than the troubled figure of Pontius Pilate who uttered the immortal words "What is truth?" For ten years from A.D. 26-36 Pilate was the Roman officer in charge of Judea and therefore destined to confront Jesus of Nazareth. That day arrived when the High Priest Caiaphas turned Jesus over to Roman authority for official trial and punishment. Pilate has the distinction of being the only person during Jesus' trials that He chose to talk with. He refused to answer the Judean king Herod Antipas and only under oath did so for Caiaphas. Pilate alone was given the much sought explanation for Jesus' messianic claims, namely that He was a King sent from beyond this world to bring truth to the world (John 18:36-37). Based on his interrogation of Jesus, Pilate found insufficient evidence for a verdict, and would have apparently released Jesus had it not been for the political pressure brought by the Jewish Sanhedrin (John 19:12-15). Perhaps it was for this reason that Pilate, defying the Sanhedrin's protest, placed a placard (known as a *titulus*) in public display above Jesus on the cross which read in Hebrew, Latin and Greek: "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19-22). Today, Pilate has spoken again to bring evidence to our age that demands an historical verdict to the Gospel's account. From Pilate's official residence at the Mediterranean seaboard city of Caesarea Maritima in excavations at Caesarea's Roman theater came a stone plaque bearing the name of Pilate. The two-foot by three-foot slab, now known as the Pilate Inscription, was found re-used as a building block in a fourth century remodeling project, but it was an authentic first-century monument, apparently written to commemorate Pilate's erection and dedication of a Tiberium, a temple for the worship of Tiberias Caesar, the Roman emperor during Pilate's term over Judea. The Latin inscription of four lines gives his title as "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea," a title very similar to that used of him in the Gospels (see Luke 3:1). This archaeological evidence of Pilate again testifies to the accuracy of the Gospel writers. Their understanding of such official terms indicate they lived during the time of their use and not a century or two thereafter when such usage would have been forgotten.

Side Bar #3: A Witness of Crucifixion

One of the central events of the Easter story is Jesus' death by Roman crucifixion. When Jesus and the two criminals were crucified it was on both the afternoon of the greatest festival in Judaism and the Sabbath. Therefore, the Jewish rulers had demanded a quick crucifixion so as to not desecrate the approaching holy day (John 19:31-32). Such archaeological details reveal that the Gospel writers had been historical eyewitnesses of the crucifixion, just as they said (John 19:35). Nevertheless, because no material evidence of any crucified victim had ever been uncovered in the holy land skeptics and scholars dismissed the Gospels accounts as either imagined or inaccurate. They argued that nails could not have been used to fasten a crucified victim to a cross, because the anatomy of hands and feet could not support them. They were rather bound by ropes. This directly contradicted Jesus' own testimony when after His resurrection He showed His crucified body to His disciples and said "See My hands and My feet ..." (Luke 24:39). In like manner, these same critics contended that Jesus' body, as the body of most criminals and insurrectionists, would not have received a proper burial, but instead would have been dumped into a common grave set aside for the corpses of those defiled by crucifixion. Therefore, the narrative concerning Jesus' burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:51-56), from which He was resurrected, was nothing more than a fictitious tale. However, archaeology has since produced a witness to the contrary. In 1968 the remains of a crucified man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar, a northern suburb of Jerusalem, was discovered in an ossuary from near the time of Jesus. The name of the man, from an Aramaic inscription on the ossuary, was Yohanan ben Ha'galgol, and from an analysis of his skeletal remains he was in his thirties, approximately the same age as Jesus at the time of His crucifixion. His ankle bone was still pierced with a 7 inch-long crucifixion nail and attached to a piece of wood from a cross. Apparently the nail had hit a knot in the olive wood *patibulum* (the upright section of a cross) and become so lodged that the victim could not be removed without retaining both the nail and a fragment of the cross. In addition, according to one anthropological analyst, there were marks of nails also on the wrist bones and of a board had been used to support the feet. This find reveals afresh the horrors of the Roman punishment as recorded in the Gospels. They indicate that the position the body assumed on the cross was with the legs nailed on either side of the upright stake. Therefore, rather than the body being straight, it was pushed up and twisted, causing terribly painful muscle spasms and eventually death by the excruciating process of asphyxiation. The discovery refutes the theory that crucified victims were simply tied to the cross. The fact that the bones of Yohanan were found in secondary burial within a tomb also disproves the second hypothesis, for this crucified victim, like Jesus, had received a proper Jewish burial.