

BOOK DESCRIPTION

SETTLEMENT IN JUDAH AND SAMARIA IN THE LIGHT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF 1968*

After Judah, Samaria, the Golan and Sinai had come under Israeli administration in the wake of the Six Day War, a quick archaeological survey of those areas was initiated. The Survey was carried out by the Israel Union for Archaeological Surveys with the assistance of various bodies.

Many archaeological surveys have been conducted in these parts by different groups in the last century. However, the means of transportation and research have since been developed and improved upon and interest in the subject has increased. In this new Survey, which lasted only four months, many new sites, previously unknown, were discovered. The Survey brought to light the type and density of settlements in the different areas and the history of their development.

It must be noted, however, that an archaeological survey in general, and a quick one in particular, cannot take the place of archaeological excavations in all the sites included in it. Its importance lies in revealing concrete examples of settlement in the area under discussion. Here we will discuss the results of the Judah and Samaria Survey only.

Geography

The Survey in Judah and Samaria covered a number of areas rich in historical and geographical significance: the areas of half the Tribe of Manasseh and Ephraim in Samaria, the Land of Benjamin in the Beth-El Hills, the inheritance of Judah and Simeon in the Judean Hills, the Judean Desert, the wilderness of Jericho, the western slope of Kikar Hayarden and its extension to the north, and the western part of the northern Jordan Valley. The difference of geography in these areas influenced by its very nature the type and scope of settlement in different periods.

In order to evaluate the form of settlement, it is necessary to mention some basic geographical facts. The fertile land of Samaria is divided by

* See: Judah, Samaria, and Golan, an Archaeological Survey of the Year 1968, Jerusalem, 1972. Hebrew title: **יהודה, שומרון וגולן; סקר ארכיאולוגי בשנת תשכ"ח**. At the head of the Golan Survey stood Kalir Epstein and Shemaryahu Gutman. At the head of the Jericho Wilderness and the Judean Desert Survey stood Pesach Bar-Adon. At the head of the Ephraim Hills Survey stood Ram Gufna and Yosef Porat. At the head of the Benjamin Survey stood Zakhariah Kallai and at the head of the Judean Hills Survey stood Moshe Kokhavi. The writer was the secretary of the project.

rolling slopes and covered with alluvial valleys. The valleys consisted of small plots of land which could hold many points of settlement with few inhabitants.

In the Land of Benjamin the situation is largely similar. This stretch of land is characterised, however, by orchards on the rocky slopes of the hills. The advanced fruit farms of the Land of Benjamin facilitated a higher concentration of population in larger settlements.

In the Hebron Hills, which are higher than the hills of Benjamin, late-season fruit plantations developed; whereas in the low-precipitation and near-barren alluvial valleys only a most meagre population living on natural pasture and winter crops could exist.

The Judaeen Desert is mainly a nomadic area comparable to the Dead Sea Valley in its paucity of water sources and arable lands. The Jordan Plain, on the other hand, and the northern part of the Jordan Valley are rich in water and fertile lands, making a flourishing settlement possible along the whole strip.

Settlements from the Chalcolithic Period (end of 5th millennium BCE)

Such settlements had so far been discovered mostly in river valleys, in the Judaeen Desert, in the Treasure Cave, the Jericho Valley, the Ein Gedi region, the northern Negev, and other regions in Israel. A few more contemporary settlements were now uncovered on the southern and eastern edges of the Judaeen Plateau, mostly in the Jericho Valley, the eastern Jordan Valley, and the Fatsa'el region up to the Damia Bridge. On the other hand there were almost no Chalcolithic settlements discovered in the Hills of Ephraim, the Land of Benjamin, and the Judaeen Hills themselves. It seems that the central mountain range was not fit for the settlement conditions of this period. The Chalcolithic settlers preferred to live near water springs and with ample pasture and sowing areas ready for use.

The Early Bronze Period (middle 4th – end 3rd millennium BCE)

This period is characterised by an appreciable increase in fortified cities, which, having broken with the ancient tribal system, organised themselves in the form of city-states. Many mounds testify to this fact. The Survey broadened the map of settlements from this period to eighty sites, a few of which are a continuation of older settlements, but most are new settlements established during the great urbanisation movement.

The Jericho Valley, the Judaeen Desert, and the Jordan Valley are poor in settlements of this period. In the Judaeen Hills a few sites were found, some on the hills (as opposed to the valley settlements of the previous period) and some in the foothills. In the Land of Benjamin, the Hills of Ephraim, and the Land of Manasseh the sites from this period are more numerous. Almost all are located near a water source: springs, streams, or

high ground-water. It is clear that the hard living conditions along the Dead Sea, in the Jericho Valley, and in the Judaeen Desert did not enable the establishment of large towns as part of the intensive urban process at work during this period.

The Middle Bronze Period

The Survey brought to light but a few settlement remains from the Middle Bronze Period I (the end of the third to the beginning of the second millennium BCE). As is well-known, there are large cemeteries from this period containing thousands of graves which testify to a unique burial culture and a well-developed iron and pottery industry. However, almost no contemporaneous settlements are known of. This period is one of marked regression in urbanisation as compared to the Early Bronze Period. It is related, as became clear, with the great population movement whose final stage coincides with the period of the Patriarchs.

In the second stage of this period, that of the Patriarchs, (Middle Bronze II, the beginning to the end of the second millennium BCE) a further process from nomadism to urbanisation took place. This process consisted of the movement from the desert's edge to the central mountain range. In addition to the large settlements on the known mounds (Jericho, Tel Far'a, Dotan, and others), the Survey uncovered 58 settlements.

It is important to note the large number of settlements on the Ephraim Hills and the Land of Manasseh as opposed to the small number in the Jericho Valley. The intensive settlement spread in this period to areas without flowing water and large areas of land as well. It seems that in this period the digging of cisterns to hold rain water was begun.

The Late Bronze Period (15th - 12th cent. BCE)

The outstanding mark of the time is a steep decline in the number of sites. In the Judaeen Desert and the Jericho Valley no remains from this period were found at all. In Judah the sites that were found are the known mounds of Qe'ila and Rabud. In the Hills of Ephraim and the Land of Manasseh only four sites were uncovered, in addition to Yiv'am, Tel-Tzofar, Tel-Dotan, and others that have been known of for a long time.

The Iron Age (13th to 6th cent. BCE)

In the Iron Age there was a marked increase in the density of settlement in Judah and Samaria, a period also in which the level of the archaeological finds was high.

The beginning of the Iron Age saw the inception of a settlement process that soon turned into a far-flung movement which covered the whole country, in particular the central mountain ranges of the Ephraim and Judaeen Hills. The period came to an end with the destruction of the Sama-

rian Kingdom in the 8th century and the destruction of the First Temple in the 6th.

The Israelite settlement in the Judaeen Hills, the Land of Benjamin, the Hills of Ephraim and the Land of Manasseh was a continuous process that reached its zenith in the 11th and 12th centuries BCE. After this there was a decline in the scope of settlement, which gathered force again in the 8th century in Judah, expanding to regions in the Jordan Valley and along the west coast of the Dead Sea.

The Survey increased the number of known settlements from this period by 314, both small and large ones. In the Hills of Ephraim and in the Land of Benjamin this density is especially marked: the distance between two settlements is sometimes no more than one or two kilometres. This period saw an intensive settling, taking full advantage of the agricultural potential of the central mountain range and the foothill region, areas which had been scarcely populated before. In this system of settlement there was hardly a need for natural water sources. Cisterns, plastered in order to be able to contain rainwater all year round, were dug instead.

The map of settlement of the period shows a special configuration: large central settlements with small "daughter" ones around them. Some of the settlements were founded in the Israelite Period and remained extant during the whole period, some were built on foundations of earlier settlements and some existed for only a certain time during this period.

From what was excavated it seems that at first the Israelites settled in uninhabited parts of the Judaeen Hills, the Hills of Ephraim and the Land of Manasseh. Afterwards, having gathered strength, the Israelite settlements took their place alongside, or on the site of, settlements that had been in existence before, in particular on the edge of the central mountain range and in the "Shephela".

The development of the dug and plastered cistern opened the way for a mountain agriculture based on the terrace system. This system was founded on the creation of long and narrow strips of land on the mountain slopes, thus exploiting the full soil potential.

From the second part of this period we have a chain of forts and strongholds along the west coast of the Dead Sea with, at the foot of the mountains of the east, defence walls. Probably this defence system was designed to protect the pasture areas in the region. Most of these forts are from Uzziah's period (8th cent.). Uzziah was interested, as is well-known, in developing the pastoral branch of agriculture.

The Persian Period.

After the destruction of the First Temple, the settlement of Judah renewed. There are quite a few sites from this period in the Hills of Ephraim and the Land of Manasseh, but mainly in the Land of Benjamin and

the Judaeen Hills. Only a few sites from this period were found in the Jericho Valley and the Judaeen Desert.

Some of the sites found are small and unprotected, perhaps of small vinegrowers and yeomen, from the poorest section of the people, who had remained in the country after the destruction. Others are more or less uniformly built strongholds, probably Persian forts built to protect the Kingdom. A line of such forts exists along the southern border of the province "Yahud".

The Hellenistic Period (333 - 60 BCE)

This period was also one of intensive settlement but, due to the building boom of the Roman period, which followed it, many remains from this period were either ruined or destroyed. Therefore the picture the Survey obtained of the Hellenistic Period is fragmented and relates only to settlements known to us from the written sources in our possession.

Nevertheless a great number of contemporaneous settlements were discovered in the Judaeen Hills and the Land of Benjamin. But other than a few settlements in the Hills of Ephraim, the Land of Manasseh, the Jericho Valley and the Judaeen Desert, the remains of this period are very few.

The Roman Period (60 BCE - 200 CE)

This period is marked by a sharp increase in the strength and the standard of the settlements. In the Survey some 70 settlements in the Judaeen Hills, some 100 in the Judaeen Desert and the Jericho Valley, about 60 in the Land of Benjamin and another 100 in the Hills of Ephraim and the Land of Manasseh were examined.

In this period the population grew, the standard of settlement rose, as probably also did the standard of living. A network of roads was built, criss-crossing the country. Alongside the roads many stations and settlements were set up. But the main improvement was the novel means of supplying and delivering water over long distances.

The settlements of this period are varied. There are many fortified towns, isolated forts, small strongholds, agricultural farms, small townlets, villages, and military camps. These settlements are scattered over all the areas, without any particular bearing to the geographical conditions. It is clear that, due to the high technological level of the period the population succeeded in freeing itself from its dependence on natural conditions. The density of the population and its growth brought about an expansion of settlement. The Jordan Valley and the foothills were also settled. This expansion went hand in hand with an enterprising improvement of the standard of living, e. g. the delivery of water from one place to another, the cultivation of the soil etc.

The Byzantine Period (200 - 680 CE)

During the Byzantine Period the density of population increased even

further. In the Judaeen Hills some 130 settlements were inspected, 30 more were checked in the foothills. The Jericho Valley, the Jordan Valley and the Judaeen Desert were also densely populated. In these settlements, partly and wholly preserved synagogues were discovered. It can be seen from this that the accepted view of Judah after the Bar-Kokhba rebellion as being deserted of its Jewish inhabitants needs to be re-examined after the publication of the Survey. The many Jewish remains that were found, particularly in Judah, point in the opposite direction. After the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) the deserted areas of the Judaeen Desert and the Jericho Valley served as shelter for the refugees, whereas at the end of the Talmudic period they were densely populated.

In the Land of Benjamin and the southern Hills of Ephraim some 120 sites from this period were checked, villages, townlets, and fortresses. A most densely settled area from the same period was found in the northern Hills of Ephraim and in the Land of Manasseh, where the Survey reported some 200 sites, small and large, villages, towns, fortresses, graves, and others.

Summary

It is possible to distinguish three forms of settlement:

a) temporary settlement of nomads or semi-nomads on their way to permanent settlement. This form of settlement is found in the Chalcolithic Period, the Middle Bronze I and the Middle Bronze II.

b) fortified urban settlement, part and parcel of a defensive system: in the Early Bronze and the Persian Periods this form of settlement was widespread.

c) dense settlement covering large open areas including complete arrays of cities, villages, small towns, farms and forts. These systems, which we find in the Iron Age and the Byzantine Period, are the fruit of a long-term development. This form of settlement is the social framework in which a system of new social, legal and religious values could be created.

Description by Dr. Zeev Yeivin