

## CHAPTER SIX

# TERRITORIAL STATES

### TENTH CENTURY BCE

During the course of the tenth century BCE, it was clear that certain territorial states came into being in the Levant. In North Syria, the Neo-Hittite city-states had managed to survive the crisis at the end of the thirteenth century BCE. The emerging Assyrian sources at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the ninth century BCE reveal the presence of territorial states with Aramaic eponyms alongside the Neo-Hittite states. Unfortunately, those new Aramean states have not left behind a body of literary tradition that would reveal the process of settlement, assimilation and consolidation that led to their establishment. There can be no doubt that such oral and written traditions existed and would have provided a rich source of cultural and social information. The Neo-Hittite monumental art comprises a special field of study but it is hard to distinguish specific Aramean elements. In the southern Levant, a literary, historiographic tradition does exist while monumental art is absent. Even architectural remains from the tenth century BCE are hotly disputed in some circles.

The Assyrians were engaged in a struggle for survival against the Arameans. They had managed to deflect the thrust of the Aramean tribes southward toward Babylonia. However, the Arameans had managed to settle along the eastern bank of the Tigris. More important, they had occupied areas in the northern Jez'rah and along the Euphrates and had succeeded in overrunning some Assyrian territories and driving out the Assyrian population, for example in the reign of Shalmaneser II in the mid-eleventh century BCE and in that of Ashur-rabi II in the late eleventh to early tenth centuries BCE. This situation would only be righted toward the end of the tenth century BCE.

The Arameans had penetrated northern Mesopotamia and founded large tribal states, Bīt-Zamāni (in the Diyarbakir region), Bīt-Bakhiāni (at Guzānu=Gozan, Tell Ḥalāf and Nāšibīna=Niṣībīn), Bīt-Khalūpe (in the Khabūr/Euphrates triangle) and Bīt-Adini (Til-Barsip=Tell Aḥmar), which was probably the oldest. Henceforth, those areas remained Arameized in population. West of the Euphrates lay Bīt-Agusi, encompassing

Ḥalab (Aleppo) and especially its capital, Arpad (Tell Rif'at). There was also the kingdom at Sam'al (Sinjirli), possibly called Bīt-Gabbāri.

The process of penetration, occupation and acculturation for the late eleventh and early tenth centuries BCE is undocumented



THE KINGDOM OF DAVID AND ESHBAAL

by written sources. The process can only be surmised from the results. However, one thing is certain from the Assyrian records: the Arameans were viewed as original tribal elements, the descendants of those Akhlamū and Sutū who had harassed the caravan routes from Mesopotamia to Syria during the Bronze Age. As such they penetrated the lands between the two rivers, threatened the Assyrians and Babylonians and established territorial states usually named after an eponymous ancestor. Those latter individuals were obviously famous tribal chieftains. Around them there may have been a fascinating body of traditions but alas, none has survived.

### THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

There are no Philistine epigraphic sources

from the tenth century BCE. Their role in local history is recorded in a negative way by the biblical sources through the interactions between the Philistines and the tribes of Israel. The tenth century BCE is the story of the consolidation of the Davidic dynasty among the Israelite tribes.

**David's Rise to Power.** The eponymous founder of the Judean dynasty, David, son of Jesse, is immortalized in an essay that comprises the later chapters of the biblical Book of Samuel.

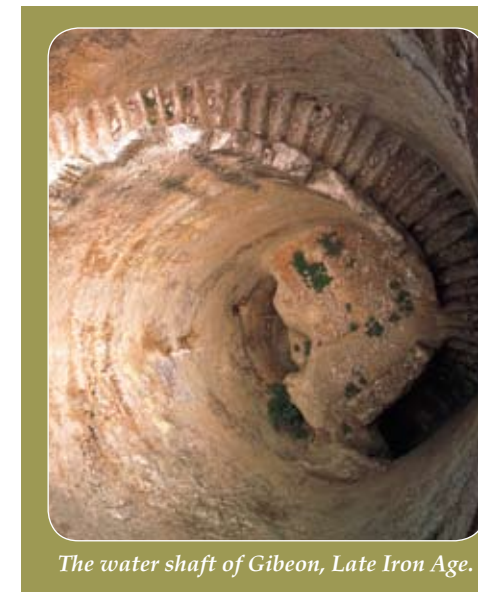
After the death of Saul, David moved his power base from Ziklag to Hebron (see 2 Sam 2:1-4). So in effect, David united Judah and the other client tribes, viz. Caleb, Kenaz, the Kenites, the Jerahmeelites, and probably the Cherethites in the western Negeb around Ziklag. The choice of Hebron was a wise one. It was centrally located between David's own Judahite clan on the north, and the client clans on the south. Hebron had, or developed, strong Abrahamic traditions as well.

**Simeon.** Another tribe was also within David's sphere of influence and it cannot be determined if the expansion of that tribe's inheritance took place during David's tenure at Hebron or later, when he had established a new capital in Jerusalem. The record (in three parallel pericopes) of Simeon's towns is comprised of two lists, a long and a short one. They are best represented in 1 Chronicles 4:24-31a.

It is important to note carefully that verses 28-31a list towns *after* David began to reign while verse 32 lists towns *prior* to David's reign. The ill-advised division of the verses broke up the true heading for the short list and left the impression that Simeon had lived in the towns of the long list "until David's reign." The short list is recorded in 1 Chronicles 4:31b-33.

It must be remembered that while David and his troop were at Ziklag, there was no mention of Simeon. Furthermore, there was no "Negeb of Simeon." The only problem city is Hormah because in Judges 1:17 it seems to be described as an early Simeonite conquest albeit in conjunction with Judah.

What seems to have happened is that



The water shaft of Gibeon, Late Iron Age.

David found he could use the Simeonites to protect his southern frontier. Whether he took this step at Hebron or later is a moot point. It will be observed that David did not establish any Levitical cities in the Negeb. In the ancestral tradition Simeon and Levi are brothers, eponyms whose violent behavior (Gen 34) prevented them from having an inheritance of their own (Gen 49:5-7).

The tribal town list needs some textual adjustments, not all of them capable of final decisions. The Simeonite list in Joshua (Josh 19:1-8; included also in Josh 15:21-32) can correct a few obvious errors from the Chronicles list, also vice versa, not to mention the LXX versions. The following passage emphasizes only the differences with the better readings in bold and the inferior ones in italics:

*Then the second lot fell to Simeon, to the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families, and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Judah. So they had as their inheritance Beer-sheba and Sheba (correct to read Shema as in Josh 15:32) and Moladah, and Hazar-shual and Balah and Ezem, and Eltolad and Bethul and Hormah, and Ziklag and Beth-marcaboth and Hazar-susah, and Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhen; thirteen cities with their villages; Ain, Rimmon and Ether and Ashan; four cities with their villages; and all the villages which are around these towns as far as Baalath-beer (Kh. el-Meshāsh=Tel Masos), Ramath-negeb (Kh. Gharrah=Tel Ira). This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families.*

(Josh 19:1-8)

**The Intertribal War.** For seven years it is said that war raged between the Davidic coalition in the south and the Saulide coalition in the north. This reflected age-old differences in the two regions and the two tribal "leagues" (see 2 Sam 2:8-9, 4:2, 4:7).

To what degree this description reflects a political reality from that time is impossible to assess. The tribes of Galilee are not included and that is true to the situation attending Saul's death when he died trying to gain a foothold in the north. The conflict is illustrated in the narrative by a battle that

took place in the vicinity of Gibeon (see 2 Sam 2:12-32).

There is no way that the "pool of Gibeon" could be the water shaft excavated at el-Jīb. It must have been a water-collection facility outside the confines of the town, probably in the field close to the point where the spring water flows out from its source. In such a place the opposing forces could have arranged themselves for the ensuing contest. The opening gambit by twenty-four champions from each side is again reminiscent of a well-known Mediterranean theme.

The chain of events that developed from the battle at Gibeon led to the death of Joab's brother, Asahel, at the hand of Abner, and the subsequent assassination of Abner by Joab. This was considered the run-up to the assassination of Ish-bosheth/Eshbaal and the subsequent uniting of the two coalitions under David (see 2 Sam 4:1-3).

The two assassins were from a clan of Gibeonites reckoned as part of Benjamin, but their clan had fled to Gittaim, which must also have been known as Gath-rimmon. Their act of regicide may have been in revenge for Saul's acts of cruelty against their clan.

The tragic deaths of Abner and Eshbaal led to David's kingship over the northern tribal coalition. Just as David had chosen Hebron as a capital to unite Judah and the client tribes in the south, he now chose to conquer the Jebusite enclave at Jerusalem and make that city his dynastic possession ("the city of David"). By now the Philistines realized that the unification of all the tribes under David posed a threat to their hegemony in the hill country.

Twice they came up against him via the Valley of Rephaim (cf. Josh 15:8). The first time, they had a garrison positioned at Bethlehem (2 Sam 23:14) to prevent David from getting help from the south. David smote them and called the place of his victory Baal-perazim (2 Sam 5:20).

The second time that the Philistines came, David ambushed them by blocking their retreat at the western end of the Valley of Rephaim: "and he smote the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer" (2 Sam 5:25).

Having expelled the Philistines from the central hill country, David was free to bring the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath-jearim to his new capital in Jerusalem (2 Sam 6; 1 Chr 13, 15). Then he took the initiative against the Philistines on the coastal plain (see 1 Chr 18:1).

Geographically, this text seems superior to the "bridle of the forearm(?)" of 2 Samuel 8:1. The reference here is probably not to

"Gath of the Philistines" (Am 6:2; Tell eṣ-Ṣāfi = Tel Zafit), of the pentapolis, but rather the Gath/Gittaim/Gath-rimmon northwest of Gezer. This victory secured David's control over the corridor from Gezer, where David left the indigenous Canaanites unmolested, to the seaport at Joppa.

**David's Transjordanian and Syrian Conquests.** The course of David's Transjordanian conquests may be traced chronologically by correlating the information in 2 Samuel 8:2-11 (=1 Chr 18:2-11) with that of 2 Samuel 10:1-19, 11:1 and 11:26-31 (=1 Chr 19:1-19, 20:1-3). The development was apparently as follows:

1. **Moab.** Moab was conquered and reduced to vassal status, thus giving David firm control over the tableland north of the Arnon (2 Sam 8:2 || 1 Chr 18:2).

2. **Ammon.** At this point, the suggestion can be accepted to treat 2 Samuel 10:1-11:1, 12:26-31 || 1 Chronicles 19:1-20:3 as the next stage in the course of events. As was his wont, the author of the Book of Samuel gave precedence to certain crucial events in the career of David. Here he is concerned with the affair of David, Bath-sheba and Uriah the Hittite. Thus, he strove to set the political and geographic scene and the course of events that brought the Israelite army to the walls of Rabbath-bene-ammon where Uriah could be exposed and killed. To do so, he must begin with the initial conflict with the Ammonites.

The new Ammonite ruler, Hanun, showed his displeasure at the new Israelite military presence so close to his borders by insulting David's ambassadors (2 Sam 10:1-5 = hegemony in the hill country).



THE BATTLE BY THE POOL AT GIBEON