

Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society,
1983-1984

The International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem

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This year the Israel Exploration Society has its seventieth anniversary. In order to mark this special event, an International Congress on Biblical Archaeology was held in Jerusalem at the Hilton Hotel. About eight hundred people participated.

The Congress was divided into two major parts: firstly, from the evening of 1 April up to the night of 5 April, there were the various talks, responses, discussions and so on. Secondly, for those who could make it, from 6 to 10 April there were excursions to various excavation sites in the country. I myself could only participate in the first part. The themes covered in the Congress were multiple, and they included the moot terminological problem of 'Biblical Archaeology', the difficult and agonizing research into Israel's origins, general methodological questions on stratigraphy, chronology and terminology, the Philistines, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Early Christianity, and so on. In one word, the Congress was comprehensive.

The schedule was rather tight: excluding the first day when we were kept busy for a few hours from 8.00 pm onwards after having finished the registration procedures, one had to reckon with the following scheme: 8.30 am-12.30 pm; 2.00 pm-6.00 pm; and 8.00 pm-10.00 pm. The last block of time was varied, and it included a visit to the Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book; a special Knesset session under the auspices of Professor Yuval Ne'eman, Minister of Science and Development, who introduced Thorkild Jacobsen and Samuel N. Kramer who spoke respectively on Sumerian literature and Sumerian mythology; a reception at the Maierdorf Faculty Club of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, and finally a festive farewell at the Jerusalem Theatre under the auspices of Mr Teddy Kollek, the mayor. Unfortunately, circumstances forbade me from attending this last meeting.

The talks were interesting and raised many questions, as was evidenced by the lively discussions. It was also a good idea to have a number of speakers who gave brief responses to the different talks.

I thought that one of the liveliest days was 2 April, when the problem of Israel's settlement in Cana'an was dealt with. One could see here a test case in Biblical Archaeology. The proposals and reactions stemming from the literary, archaeological and historical viewpoints were far from unanimous: the mind ranged from envisaging Israel invading Cana'an, to settling down peacefully in it, to rebelling against the Cana'anite overlords from within Cana'anite society itself. Another

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special feature was on the morning of 5 April when we were split up into various groups and given a good guided tour of David's City, the Temple Mount and the Upper City.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society for generously giving me a travel grant to attend the International Congress. The latter including the precious encounters with various international scholars, certainly proved beneficial for my doctoral studies on the transition from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age in Palestine.