

and Israelite occupation, often marked by a thick layer of ashes separating the two different cultures. Similar evidence is found at the end of the Israelite monarchy. The Bible tells us that they were conquered by invaders from distant Mesopotamia and the bulk of the people taken into exile. The excavations show cities at a high stage of culture, coming to a sudden end, with a destruction followed by a long period in which there is no evidence of any extensive occupation in the land. The Lachish letters vividly illustrate the situation at the time of the great Babylonian invasion just before the downfall of the Judaeen kingdom.

Sometimes great doubt has been expressed as to the reality of the high point in Israelite prosperity and culture, described in the Bible as having occurred at the time of Solomon. H. G. Wells stated that the alleged greatness of Solomon was badly overestimated. He said that actually Solomon was a petty kinglet, not at all of the calibre that the Bible would make one believe. However, excavations at Megiddo show that at the time of Solomon a great part of the city was given over to stalls for his horses, fitting in with the statement of 1 Kings 9.15 and 19, that among the cities that he rebuilt, one of which is named as Megiddo, were whole cities for his chariots and for his horsemen. Only a ruler of great power and wealth could be responsible for this extensive layout at Megiddo.

Further evidence on the power and wisdom of King Solomon came to light as a result of Blueck's excavations at Ezion-geber in 1937-40, which showed that this town at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba, far south of the Dead Sea, had been built at the time of Solomon in accordance with a definite master plan, by people who gave evidence of Israelite culture rather than that of the surrounding region. The central feature of the city was a great complex of factories, utilizing the wind from the north in such a way as to make it possible to smelt ore at a high temperature, thus using the principle of the modern blast furnace. Building such