

It was their idea that at the time of Solomon the Israelites were polytheists. It was customary, at that period whenever a column was found, to think of it as a symbol of some ancient religion. A little later, Prof. Andrae, a famous German archaeologist, proved that the great majority of the columns that have been found from ancient times have nothing to do with any particular religion, but are in most instances simply a means of holding up the second story of the houses. However, this was, before Andrae's time and these excavators felt that a square column they had found in this fourth layer from the top must be a symbol of an ancient religion.

An interesting problem faced them. The column had a hole running across obliquely from one side to the adjoining side. It was hard to see the purpose of this hole. It certainly was not a means of carrying away the blood of a sacrifice, because the column was much too tall to be an altar, and anyway the hole was perfectly level and did not reach the top of the column, but went from one side to the other.

The problem remained in this situation for about twenty years. Then John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave a total of over twelve million dollars to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago for excavation in the Near East. Among the projects that the Oriental Institute undertook was a thorough excavation of Megiddo. The entire hill was purchased, and a modern efficient expedition headquarters was built. The new expedition undertook to examine the hill thoroughly, not using the old outmoded trench system but carefully excavating a large area. A hill like this, where eighteen cities have existed, one above the other, is somewhat like an onion. One can peel off layer after layer, if the work is done with care. It was decided to excavate half of the city. The uppermost stratum was uncovered, examined, photographed and carefully studied. Then the entire top city was removed and the second city was cleared. After it had been studied, the same was done with the third city.

When I visited Megiddo in 1929, the fourth layer had been uncovered, on half of the mound. At this time I was on a horse-back trip with a group of scholars, visiting ancient Palestinian sites. We were fortunate in reaching Megiddo just before the new season of excavation was to commence. Everything was in readiness, and the workers were due to arrive at Megiddo the next day, so Dr. Guy, the Director had ample leisure to conduct us around the mound, and to explain everything to us. He referred to the various conjectures that had been made, twenty years before, about the strange column that had been found. Then he pointed out that the new excavation had uncovered many similar square columns, all arranged according to a definite plan, and each having a hole cut through obliquely from one side to the adjoining one. The columns stood in rows. Each row was faced by another similar row of columns, a few feet away. Some little distance back of each of these rows there was a wall. A large part of the mound consisted of this sort of layout. As we looked at it, Dr. Guy said, "It is easy to see that these columns have nothing to do with any sort of ancient worship. These are stables for horses, and the hole through each column is to put a rope through to tie the horse!" Dr. Guy pointed out that in some places mangers were still in position. The arrangement was very similar to that of a modern barn, except that the horses were put in the stalls in such a way as to face toward the central passage, instead of having their back toward it. There were stalls for hundreds of horses.

Then Dr. Guy turned our attention to I Kings 9, where verse 15 gives a brief summary of Solomon's great building activities: "And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer."

We note that one of the cities mentioned as a place where Solomon carried on his great building work is Megiddo. In verse 19 we find more detail. It says, "And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen....."

Critics used to scoff at the idea of Solomon having whole cities for his horsemen. It seemed to them fantastic to think that Solomon ever had such power and wealth that he could take whole cities for his horsemen and for his horses. Here, however, was factual evidence that Solomon actually did have whole cities given over to his horsemen. Similar layouts have subsequently been found at other cities from the time of Solomon. No one but a wealthy potentate could devote whole cities to this purpose, particularly when horses were very uncommon in Palestine during the entire Old Testament period, just as they still were in 1929 when I rode horseback through a great part of Palestine.