

centuries, and are found in several successive strata ; sometimes the action of sun and rain carries a small object down to a stratum to which it does not belong ; and sometimes, in sinking for foundations, the contents of lower strata have been brought to the surface, and again covered up in their false position by later accumulations. These disturbances, as a rule, can be readily detected, and the skilled explorer is able to refer nearly everything he finds to its proper stratum, and, consequently, to the period during which the rubbish of that bed was accumulating. The determination of the date and duration of the period which each bed, or stratum, represents is rendered exceptionally difficult in Palestine by the small number of objects found which can be dated with certainty. But, within certain limits, a trained archæologist is able to read the history of an ancient city which he is excavating with very considerable accuracy.

The excavations at Gezer have disclosed the stratified débris of seven periods of occupation. During the first and second periods, which are represented by the two lowest strata, the site was occupied by an aboriginal, non-Semitic race, of slight build and small stature—none exceeded 5 feet 7 inches, and most of them were under 5 feet 4 inches. These people, who in some respects resemble the occupants of Europe during the Neolithic Age, lived in caves, or in rude huts of mud and stone, and cremated their dead in a cave specially prepared for the purpose.

Between the second and third strata there is a distinct break, indicating the advent of a new race. The Neolithic cave-dwellers gave place to a Semitic people of stronger build and more advanced civilisation. These Semites were from 5 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 11 inches in height, and had well-developed skulls ; their racial type was not unlike that of the modern Arab. They lived in houses of mud and stone, crowded together like those of a Palestine village, and surrounded them with walls. The Gezerites of this period buried their dead within the walls, making use of the crematorium, and other rock excavations of their predecessors. Sometimes their food vessels and sometimes their exceptionally fine bronze weapons were buried with them. Scarabs and impressions of scarab-seals of the Egyptian Middle Empire occur in abundance, and a fragment of an inscribed statue of the same period was uncovered. Amongst other finds are broken statuettes of a cow divinity ; a little bone needle-case containing a

bronze needle; moulds for casting arrow-heads; cylinders of Babylonian and Syrian origin; and a great number of terra-cotta plaques with figures of Ashtaroth in low relief—all broken as if some rite connected with the goddess involved the fracture of her image. Some of the pottery types, in both strata, are common to Gezer and Lachish, indicating a connection between the two places, probably tribal or racial, that may be inferred from the Bible narrative and the Tell Amarna letters. In the upper stratum the influence of Ægean art is very clear in much of the pottery.

The most interesting discovery in connection with the pre-Israelite strata is that of the *bāmāh*, or "high place" of Gezer, which dates from the early Semitic period, and was apparently altered and enlarged in the period represented by Stratum IV. The "high place" consists of a megalithic structure, standing in a court, or *ḥaram*, which has a well-defined floor of limestone chips.

The megalithic structure consists of a group of monoliths from 5 feet 5 inches to 10 feet 9 inches high, aligned in a gentle curve of which the chord is nearly north and south. West of the north end of the alignment, and evidently belonging to the scheme of the high place, is a circular structure, 13 feet 8 inches in diameter, consisting of a rude wall, now about 6 feet high, in which there is no opening. Within the precincts of the high place was found the skull of a man, of different race from that of the occupiers, whose head must have been intentionally deposited in the temple of the town divinity. With this may be compared the head of Goliath, which David buried at Jerusalem.

The *bāmāh* or "high place," which is synonymous with "holy place," was *par excellence* the sanctuary of the Semites. It was most frequently on a hill, near a spring or in a grove of trees, but at Gezer it was on the saddle between the knolls. Perhaps, remembering the large part which the worship of caves played in popular Semitic belief, the selection of the site may be attributed to some legend connected with a cave of the Neolithic race which was altered and utilised by the Semites in connection with their religious rites.

There is evidence that the high place retained its sanctity until a late period of the Jewish monarchy, when it appears to have fallen into disuse.

The fifth and sixth strata represent the occupation of Gezer by the Israelites. In the fifth stratum—that is the town which was