



## ABOUT THE ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

In Israel, history is considered a treasure and our most important national asset. The dawn of civilization arose in and around this region over a million years ago and this is the birthplace of some of the world's key religions.

There are over thirty thousand known archaeological sites scattered throughout Israel. According to the Antiquities Law, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) is mandated to protect and preserve Israel's and its territorial waters' archaeological sites.

To fulfill this mission, the IAA assesses antiquities sites, schedules archaeological excavations, and documents, researches, preserves and protects sites and objects throughout the land and sea.

The Israel Antiquities Authority's major functions are:

- \* Excavation of archaeological sites; conducting and promoting research
- \* Conservation, restoration and development of sites
- \* Management, maintenance and protection of sites
- \* Preservation and restoration of antiquities
- \* Inspection and supervision of excavations
- \* Management and supervision of the State Antiquities Collection
- \* Enforcement of the Law of Antiquities and the Israel Antiquities Authority Law
- \* Exhibit archaeological findings to the public in Israel and abroad
- \* Operation and maintenance of the IAA Library, the largest and richest source of archaeological information in the entire Middle East
- \* Documentation and registration of archaeological information
- \* Educational and informative activities – conveying knowledge and appreciation of the archaeological heritage to Israelis and foreigners of all ages
- \* International scientific exchanges

The IAA employs a staff of approximately 450 workers, primarily archaeologists, conservators and scientists who are divided among ten key departments. Among those, the largest is the Excavations and Survey Department, responsible for the declaration of antiquities sites, the granting of excavation licenses and conducting excavations and research. Other departments include: Conservation, Artifacts-care, National

< The Rockefeller Museum

The management offices of the Israel Antiquities Authority



Collections, Cataloging and Research, Publications, Education and Information, IT, Scientific Archives and the Library. Furthermore, in order to facilitate efficiency in a country with such a vast array of sites, alongside its computerized network and extensive geographic information system (GIS) the IAA operates in six divisions: North Israel, Central Israel, South Israel, Jerusalem, Marine Archaeology and the Anti-Theft Unit.

In these early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the IAA continues its efforts to strike a positive balance between the modern development of Israel and the preservation of its antiquities and antiquities sites. In doing so, the IAA ensures that it documents every archaeological remnant in full, making the information, and whenever possible, the artifacts, available to scholars and the public at large, in Israel and abroad.

Uzi Dahari, PhD  
Deputy Director  
Israel Antiquities Authority



Judean Desert

## INTRODUCTION

The land of Israel has always been a cultural crossroads. On this balmy, light kissed sliver of terrain between the Arabian Desert and the Mediterranean Sea, the beliefs and material culture of locals, nomads and invaders have intermingled for millennia.

Ancient Israel was a place, a nation, and also the fount of a new faith that has had extraordinary impact down to our own age. Its Torah (Hebrew for teaching or instruction), also known as the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament, has served as a source for Judaism, Christianity and Islam—religions with followers numbering more than a third of the world's present population.

The winds of history buffeted the ancient Israelites and their tiny land, forcing them to learn to worship and maintain their faith away from their physical center that lay besieged or conquered, often in ruins, or at too great a distance from their exile.

For many centuries powerful empires sought to dominate this vital intersection of the ancient Near East, leaving behind their influence and causing the Israelite nation and its faith to transform and be transformed, but also ensuring the wide dispersal of its ideas. Thus ancient Israel is not the product of one or a few events, but rather of evolving and unique conditions that even today continue to find new life and expression.

Israel's archaeological sites and the artifacts they have yielded provide a record of extraordinary human achievement. The pots, coins, weapons, jewelry, and other artifacts on display in this exhibition constitute a momentous contribution to our cultural legacy. They teach us about the past and about ourselves.

The biblical era, also known as the Iron Age in archaeology (1200-586 BCE), witnesses the birth and evolution of the ancient Israelite people. From obscure beginnings in small agriculturally based communities, the material culture slowly becomes more sophisticated. With the establishment of the monarchy in Israel under David and Solomon, a golden age is depicted in the Bible. Archaeology clearly shows that poor villages give way to fortified cities with monumental architecture, as ancient Israel becomes a nation.

The Israelites adopt a variation of the Phoenician alphabet and eventually begin writing. Some of these writings are collected into a "bible" (from the Latin word for "library"). They remain the primary witness to the culture of Israel and Judah. These texts were largely composed during the Iron Age and record—in prose, poetry, myth, and law—interactions of the Israelites and their god.



New writings are added to a growing collection of religious literature. The politics and theology that shape the life of the people of Judah and Israel are reflected in their texts. Unlike any other literature of the time, these writings gave the Israelites a universal culture, a wide-ranging set of laws, a fierce national identity, and a fervent connection to the land.

Today, historians, linguists and archaeologists promote our ability to understand ancient Israel. A bit of good fortune amplified their efforts when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. After all, what could be more important in studying the “People of the Book” and their sibling religions than to find hundreds of ancient copies of these very books?

That is the greatness of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These two thousand year old parchments and scraps of parchments demonstrate that in the days of Hellenic and Roman control of Judah and the Land of Israel, the Hebrew Bible was already a highly regarded collection of writings upon which the people of Israel relied to understand their history and relationship with their God. The Scrolls, discovered predominantly in the years 1947-1956, are a collection of thousands of fragments comprising some 900 scrolls. They date from around 250 BCE to 68 CE, almost a thousand years older than the next oldest copies of the Bible discovered, and include about 207 biblical manuscripts, as well community-focused scrolls that give us a glimpse into the lives of certain ancient devout believers in Israel and its God.

The majority of the scrolls are non-biblical and represent a variety of literary genres: commentary, religious legal writings, liturgical (prayer) texts, and compositions that predict a coming apocalypse. They illustrate some of the rituals and practices of a unique community and reflect the profound concerns of the authors, who apparently sought to address questions such as: Where do we fit in God’s plan? How should we live our lives? How and when will the world end? What then will happen to us?

Their answers touch on familiar themes. They believed in devotion to God, they believed in practices that reflect their understanding of the Torah (such as maintaining purity of body and intentions), they viewed themselves as a community and as part of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, and they

foresaw an end times war between good and evil that comes at a heavy cost. They were starkly negative about others who worshipped or practiced differently.

Qumran was destroyed in 68 CE. The first Dead Sea Scrolls were found 1,879 years later. The Scrolls provide a spiritual map of ancient Israel. They enable us to learn about the priesthood at the Temple in Jerusalem, find insights into community views, study religious practices at the time and assess the importance of these writings to their community.

Even today, some of ancient Israel’s key stories continue to resonate in churches, mosques and synagogues around the world, where one might hear of Abraham or the Ten Commandments. Reaching beyond religious circles, these sources have swayed philosophers, molded leaders, affected institutions of higher learning as well as courts and seats of government, and have shaped our society’s precepts of morality and justice as they have for over two thousand years and across the world’s continents.

Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn, Debora Ben Ami



Old City of Jerusalem





## ANCIENT ISRAEL

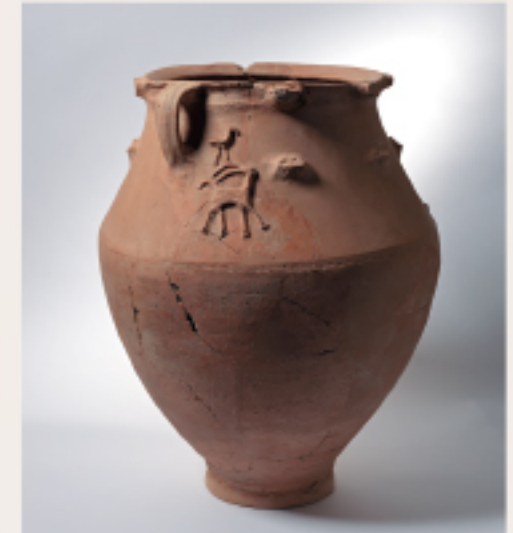
### ISRAELITE BEGINNINGS

*I will make of you a great nation . . .*      *Genesis 12:2*

Exactly when and how the Israelites settled the hill country of ancient Canaan remains an archaeological puzzle. In the period archaeologists call Iron Age I (1200-1000 BCE), hundreds of new settlements appeared in Canaan's central hill country. It is in these small, unfortified places that we find four-room houses and an abundance of pithoi, or collared-rim storage jars, which all but disappear after this period.



Collared-Rim Pithos  
En Hagit  
Iron Age I (11th century BCE)



Decorated pithos/krater  
This multi-handled krater is unusual because of the clay decoration applied to its shoulder. It includes a striding horned animal with a bird above it. A paw, presumably belonging to another animal – a lion? – appears on the rim.  
Hazor  
Iron Age I (11th century BCE)

< The acropolis of Hazor



## THE ISRAELITE “FOUR ROOM HOUSE”

*Through wisdom is a house built; and by understanding it is established*      Proverbs 24:3

The “four room house,” a rectangular house with a central courtyard surrounded by three rooms, represents the typical domestic unit inhabited by ancient Israelites throughout the Iron Age (1150-586 BCE). The courtyard was the center of household activity, which included grinding and crushing cereals, weaving with looms and clay weights, and cooking and baking in clay ovens and over open fires. The typical Israelite’s diet consisted of grains, legumes, vegetables and, less frequently, meat (other than pork). Water, wine, and oil were stored in jars of different sizes. Other pottery vessels – bowls, kraters, jugs, and juglets – were used at meals.



Typical Iron Age II domestic vessels  
Pottery pillar-handled jar, krater, juglet – Lachish; Pottery cooking pots, bowl,  
lamp – Jerusalem, City of David; Pottery jug – Arad; Basalt bowl – Horvat ‘Uza  
(8th-7th century BCE)

## MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE

*All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, even from the foundation to the coping, and from the outside to the great court.*

1 Kings 7:9

Proto-aeolic stone capitals are characteristic of royal and public building architecture in Israel and Judah during the First Temple period. The capitals are hewn from large limestone blocks and are decorated with a central triangle bordered by volutes (spiral scroll-like ornaments). Capitals of this type were found at the major administrative centers of Israel – Dan, Hazor, Megiddo, and Samaria – and of Judah – Jerusalem (City of David) and Ramat Rachel.



Limestone proto-aeolic capitals  
Megiddo, Samaria  
Iron Age II (9th-8th century BCE)

