

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

WILLIAM FOXWELL ALBRIGHT  
1891—1971

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*A Biographical Memoir by*  
THOMAS E. LEVY AND DAVID NOEL FREEDMAN

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*Biographical Memoir*

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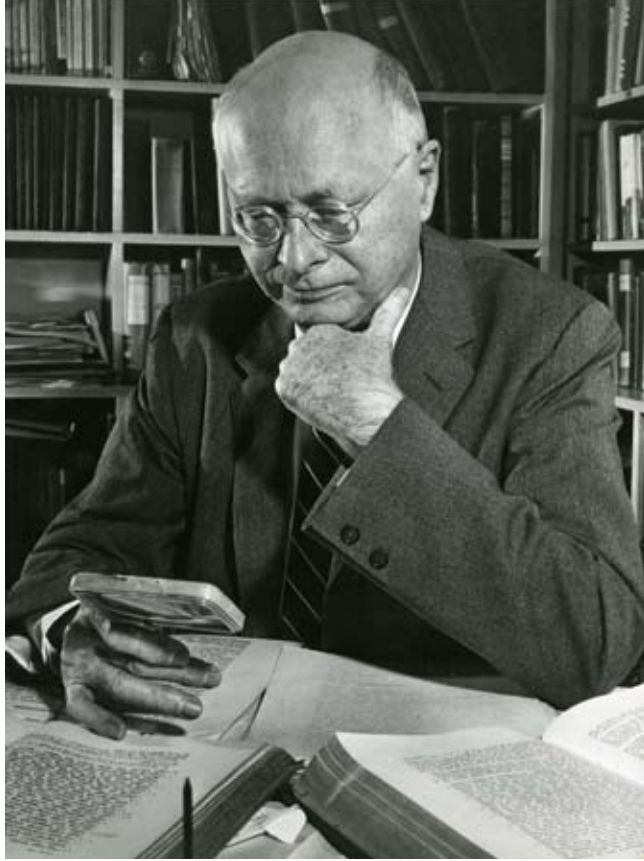


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*W.F. Albright*

# WILLIAM FOXWELL ALBRIGHT

*May 24, 1891–September 19, 1971*

BY THOMAS E. LEVY AND DAVID NOEL FREEDMAN

**A**LTHOUGH THE GREAT AMERICAN SCHOLAR William Foxwell Albright passed away many years ago, he is still regarded by most Levantine archaeologists, biblical scholars, and other Near Eastern researchers of the world of the Bible as a genius. The word “genius” is not used lightly here. Albright was a master of so many disciplines linked to the study of the ancient Near East, in particular the world of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible), that he is considered one of the last great orientalist. Having its origins as far back as the 12th century, orientalism was the study of the synthetic and simultaneous study of the history, languages, and culture of the peoples of Asia. By the 18th century, orientalists such as Sir William (“Oriental”) Jones mastered 13 languages and “dabbled in 28.” Unlike today’s scholarly world of specialization the orientalist was a polymath able to work with multiple ancient and modern languages and in a wide range of scholarly fields. While the idea of the orientalist took on negative overtones through the work of postmodern researchers in the late 1970s and 1980s, more objective approaches by scholars such as the anthropologist Ernest Gellner and others have shown that orientalist scholars such as the German Gustav Dalman, Palestinian Toufic Canaan, Alois Musil from Moravia (now Czech Republic), and men like Albright

carried out their works more from a sense of humanism and a profound interest in the history of the peoples of the Bible lands rather than as cynical tools of imperial powers. Even today ASOR (American Schools of Oriental Research), the flagship scholarly organization that Albright helped develop in the 20th century, retains the name that harkens back to the days when orientalism had a positive connotation.

Professor Albright's legacy today rests in his extraordinary record of scholarly publication. In 1941 biblical scholar Harry M. Orlinsky of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati assembled and published Albright's bibliography in honor of his 50th birthday (Orlinsky, 1941). At that time there were approximately 500 entries that spanned 30 years of scholarly work—an incredible amount of research that any scholar would be proud of. But this was only the midpoint in Albright's scholarly career that continued for another 30 years, with an additional 600 scholarly entries in the ledger. The grand total is just under 1,100 items, including books, peer-reviewed articles, notes, book reviews, and other items that must surely set a record for productivity in the field of ancient Near Eastern studies and related fields. A complete record of Albright's publications spanning 1916 to 1971 was prepared by one of us (D.N.F.) (Freedman, 1975) and was published as a book by the American Schools of Oriental Research.

Albright wrote with authority on the then developing field of ancient Near Eastern studies at a time when some of the most important discoveries were being made in the Holy Land (today's Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, southern Syria, and the Sinai peninsula). The fields of scholarly research that Albright controlled were vast and included archaeology, Semitic linguistics (including all branches of the great family of languages, especially the numerous dialects of Northwest Semitic, but not neglecting Akkadian and

Arabic), epigraphy, orthography, ancient history, chronology, historical topography, mythology—in short, all facets of ancient Near Eastern civilization from the Chalcolithic period (ca. 4500 BCE) through the Greco-Roman period. Professor Albright was the recipient of an unparalleled number of honorary degrees and a multiplicity of honors and awards from distinguished universities, learned societies, and other institutions around the world. The honor he prized most was his 1955 election to the National Academy of Sciences. It is ironic that Albright chose to be a member of its Anthropology Section, since his quarrels with anthropologists of different schools were well known at the time.

Albright's scholarly authority in ancient Near Eastern studies was so profound that the intellectual paradigm that he helped create, biblical archaeology rooted in a fairly literal interpretation of the history embedded in the Old Testament, was unchallenged during his lifetime. While archaeology in the English-speaking world—primarily the United States and the United Kingdom—was undergoing a major paradigm shift in the 1960s with the birth of the new archaeology, archaeologists working in Syro-Palestine insulated themselves from this fundamental intellectual change. This was due in great part to Albright's authority based on the way he single-handedly shaped the archaeology of the Bible lands during his long career. It was only long after Albright's death that scholars began to challenge the paradigm he established, with forays into processual, and then post-processual archaeology.

In the remainder of this memoir we will try to understand the forces that shaped Albright's approach to ancient Near Eastern studies in the Holy Land and assess how he shaped so many disparate fields, such as biblical archaeology, Assyriology, Ugaritic studies, Dead Sea Scrolls research, and other areas. Finally a brief assessment of Albright's legacy will be made.

## YOUTH AND EDUCATION

William Foxwell Albright was born in Coquimbo, Chile, on May 24, 1891. Albright's parents, Wilbur and Zephine, were earnest Christians and strict Methodists who before having children applied to the Methodist Episcopal Mission Board to work as missionaries on behalf of the church. The board appointed them to go to Chile, where the Rev. Albright served as the head of a boys' school in the copper port town of Coquimbo.

For the young Albright growing up in Chile in the late 19th century with a crippled left hand and severe nearsightedness was difficult. On a family trip to their home in Iowa, Albright tragically caught his left hand in a farm machine on his grandmother Foxwell's farm. The hand healed curled up with little movement and it wasn't until much later in life that he had an operation that slightly straightened it. Nevertheless, he felt himself crippled from the age of five. Faced with taunts from the poor children of the nearby *barrio* where Albright lived in Chile, the child faced a barrage of name calling such as *gringo* and *canuto* (protestant). By the time he was 10 years old his parents promised to buy him his most cherished wish, provided he would fetch bread from the local bakery to help save the family money. That wish was the two-volume *History of Babylonia and Assyria* recently published by Professor R. W. Rogers of Drew University. These volumes were the beginning of Albright's lifelong interest in the Near East.

By the time Albright was 22 he earned himself a much needed scholarship to Johns Hopkins University. Shortly before embarking on his studies, he confided to his mother and aunt his passion for the life of scholarship that awaited him in Baltimore by saying: "I am neither man nor woman. I am neither brute nor human—I'm a scholar!"

Albright's road to becoming an orientalist was built on his voracious reading of ancient history and his self-taught Hebrew and Assyrian, in addition to the study of French, German, Latin, and Greek; these complemented his native languages, English and Spanish. For the first time, at Johns Hopkins University, Albright was exposed to Jews and was able to learn Modern Hebrew. Albright's most important teacher was Paul Haupt, the distinguished professor of Semitic languages whose own polymath abilities in Assyriology, the Bible, Hebrew grammar, etymology, and lexicology (reflected in 522 scholarly works) no doubt had a lasting influence on Albright, the budding orientalist.

At the end of Albright's first year of studies Professor Haupt offered him the generous Rayner Fellowship for the following year, which provided \$400 plus \$150 for tuition—\$50 more than his first-year award. This welcome news came at a time when Albright wrote on several occasions that he felt he was on the edge of a nervous breakdown. He felt that if only his eyesight and his mental stability would continue strong until his written exams, he would prevail in his studies; and they did. By the end of his third year he spent 18 hours a day for three days at Prof. Haupt's home in Baltimore writing terrifying exams for the Thayer Fellowship on Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, and German; Hebrew Bible Literature and Criticism; geography; archaeology; history; and epigraphy. By the summer of 1916 Albright passed his oral exam and was awarded the Ph.D. for his dissertation on "The Assyrian Deluge Epic" (1916).

Not long after earning his doctoral degree Albright received his military draft questionnaire, filled it out, and dutifully returned it. With poor eyesight and a crippled hand, neither he nor his family expected he would be drafted or involved in the war in any way. However, by July 1918 while relaxing at home in Virginia and studying Ethiopic in a

rocking chair, he received his call-up and was inducted into the U.S. Army for limited service. For just over six months Albright became a potato peeler and dishwasher for the war effort. By Christmas 1918 he was discharged and returned to Baltimore to resume his postdoctoral studies and teaching duties. It was then that he learned that he had been awarded the prestigious Thayer Fellowship with a stipend of \$1,000—enough to barely pay for his first travels to Palestine. At this time funds were short and to save money Albright was still wearing his army uniform around town. Instead of rushing off to Palestine (ever since Albright was a boy he had worried that all the archaeological sites would be discovered before he arrived in the Holy Land), he held off for another half year and was made a Johnston scholar from Hopkins—an additional \$1,200 to help the young scholar embark on what would become his life's intimate connection with Palestine.

#### ASSYRIOLOGY

From childhood Albright considered Assyrian to be the most challenging language and literature in the world. He also thought Benno Landsberger to be the best Assyriologist in the world, and the Assyrian dictionary then being produced by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago to be the greatest project ever. He envied Landsberger for being the guiding genius of the latter and would cheerfully have traded places either with Landsberger or with Albrecht Goetze (at Yale), because he considered them the leading figures in this field. Albright blamed his failure to achieve on the same scale on his poor eyesight. However, the archaeological world may be grateful that he devoted so much of his time to the Bible and its family of languages.

The scholarly mystique of Assyriology was cultivated in Albright by Professor James Alan Montgomery, who taught



Hebrew and Assyrian at the University of Pennsylvania from 1909 to 1938. Montgomery was editor of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* and the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (BASOR); he served as Albright's mentor when the latter became director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem from 1920 to 1929. Albright tried to model his behavior on aristocratic scholars such as Montgomery and his own teacher Haupt, the famous German orientalist from Johns Hopkins University and an expert in Assyriology. One should remember that Albright's background was primarily rural and he was quite conscious of this; born in faraway Chile, he grew up between farms in Iowa and South Dakota. This provincial background served as a catalyst for Albright in making Assyriology his first scholarly love. From 1912 to 1926 Albright published 35 original articles on Mesopotamian chronology, philology, history, literature, and religion. As pointed out by P. Beaulieu (Beaulieu, 2002), Albright left Assyriology after embarking on his landmark archaeological excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim, which directly influenced his choice to devote his career to the archaeology of Palestine.

#### BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Albright's most enduring legacy is his contribution to the establishment of a new paradigm of ancient Near Eastern studies called biblical archaeology. More than any other scholar Albright's astounding corpus of books, articles, and public lectures defined a new relationship between archaeology and biblical studies. It was only after Albright's death that scholars had the gumption to seriously challenge the paradigm that Albright created. Albright defined the geographic and temporal focus of biblical archaeology as "all Biblical lands, from India to Spain, and from southern Rus-

sia to South Arabia, and to the whole history of those lands, from about 10,000 BC or even earlier, to the present time” (1966,1, p. 13).

Albright’s expansive and deep-time perspective on biblical archaeology grew out of his generalist, or orientalist, approach to understanding the evolution of the biblical world in all its intricate facets. His 50-year odyssey of scholarly activity that resulted in a well-conceived and powerful scholarly paradigm began when Albright challenged the then dominant paradigm of Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) studies established by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), the German biblical scholar who developed the documentary hypothesis to understand the development of the written Bible and Herman Gunkel’s form criticism that aimed at clarifying the oral traditions in the Hebrew Bible that preceded its codification.

The documentary hypothesis argues that the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), or the Torah/Pentateuch, are a collection of documents from four separate sources or editors and that all were combined by a single editor (called the redactor or R) sometime in the sixth century BCE. This was a radical departure from the earlier paradigm (still held by many devout Jews, Christians, and Moslems) that the Torah/Pentateuch was authored by Moses. Amongst the many assumptions in this hypothesis is the perceived very late writing of the Hebrew Bible, effectively casting doubt on the historicity of many events, peoples, and places who play critical roles in the text from the patriarchs and matriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Rebecca, Miriam, Moses, Joseph, et al.) to the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent settlement in the land of Canaan, to the early Hebrew kings such as David and Solomon and so on.

In the early 20th century other biblical scholars such as Albrecht Alt and Martin Noth were especially interested in

searching out the formative historical events that influenced the configuration of the Hebrew Bible accounts based on the internal analysis of the biblical text. Albright continued to engage in this type of internal analysis of the text using his arsenal of intellectual tools, but of more importance was his then new insistence on using external evidence from the archaeological record of the ancient Near East, in particular Palestine. Albright's definition of biblical archaeology reflects his intellectual approach to investigating the historical underpinnings of the Hebrew Bible: to situate ancient Israel in the broad traditions of the ancient Near East based on a comparative approach using both ancient texts and material culture.

Albright and his students, such as Nelson Glueck, had a significant influence during the inter-war years on American culture that included helping to shape the structure of curricula (theological, biblical, and ancient Near Eastern studies) at all the major universities—establishing what was perceived as the historical “truth” of the Old Testament, as well as the popular notion of archaeology in society as highlighted by Glueck's speech at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy and his being featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. As the British archaeologist Roger Moorey (Moorey, 1991, p. 55) observes, “In retrospect the years between the World Wars have come to be seen as the time when biblical archaeology, particularly through men like Albright and Glueck, had an academic status and a self-confidence that it had not enjoyed before and was rarely to achieve again.” How did Albright achieve this Olympian status in the scholarly world and public perception as evidenced by his remarkable number of publications, honors, awards, and accolades?

While Albright did not have a long career as a field archaeologist, the work he carried out had a profound influence on the archaeology of the southern Levant at the time and

continues to this day. Albright carried out his first excavation in Palestine at Tell el-Ful, a site he identified as Gibeah of Saul. According to J. P. Dessel (Dessel, 2002, p.43) the selection of Tell el-Ful as a major excavation project in the early 1920s was unusual since it was the large tell sites with respected biblical pedigrees that were targeted at that time in the first wave of field archaeology in the Holy Land in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He chose Tell el-Ful in part because of its biblical reputation as an Israelite regional social and religious center and for logistical reasons; it would be cheaper to excavate a smaller mound than a major site. Following a similar pattern between 1926 and 1932, Albright directed four excavation seasons at the obscure site of Tell Beit Mirsim situated near the junction of the southern Judean hills and the Shephelah region some 20 km southwest of Hebron. These excavations, his innovative ceramic analysis, and their rapid publication are what established Albright's influence as a leading archaeologist.

There is no consensus on why Albright chose this site and not one of the more famous ancient mounds that retain clear links to the Hebrew Bible: places like Hazor, Gezer, and Dan. Early on, Albright proposed identifying Tell Beit Mirsim with biblical Debir (Kiriath-Sepher), which means "city of the book" or "scribe." According to Philip J. King (King, 1983, p. 80) in his authoritative *American Archaeology in the Mideast—A History of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, it was this tentative identification that interested Melvin G. Kyle, then president of the Xenia Seminary, to finance the excavation. The implication of the name Kiriath-Sepher may have led Kyle to believe that this ancient Canaanite site would yield a rich trove of cuneiform tablets and other inscriptions. While scholars continue to debate whether Tell Beit Mirsim is indeed biblical Debir, the importance of Albright's research at the site stems from his studies of

the ceramic material from the Middle Bronze through Iron Ages that made it the type site for Palestinian archaeology for more than 60 years.

Albright built his ceramic analysis of the material from Tell Beit Mirsim on the 1890 work of the great British archaeologist Sir Flinders Petrie at Tell el-Hesi located on the edge of the Negev coastal plain. He relied especially on Petrie's development of the revolutionary principle of seriation, a relative dating tool still used by archaeologists around the world today. While Petrie had established his career as an Egyptologist, he was invited to excavate in the Holy Land by the Palestine Exploration Fund as part of their effort to gain a foothold in the country. Petrie's knowledge of Egyptian material culture from Predynastic to later periods enabled him to establish a fairly reliable dating for the Palestinian pottery found in association with Egyptian artifacts in the various strata at Tell el-Hesi. Thus, Albright used the stratigraphic record and the rich collection of pottery found at Tell Beit Mirsim to pioneer the establishment of the first rigorous ceramic chronology for the second and early first millennia BCE of Palestine. Following his first season of excavation, Albright (1926,1, p. 6) wrote: "As will be seen, we have an extraordinary opportunity here for highly interesting discoveries, and best of all to the archaeologist, excellent conditions for the study of pottery, since the strata are horizontal and exceptionally well defined."

Central to Albright's methodology was the typological method he developed for the subfield of ceramic analysis. As will be seen below, Albright's general concern and interest in methodology—whether it be in archaeology, ancient history, or epigraphy—helped him set the research agenda in Near Eastern studies during his lifetime. While some recent scholars have criticized Albright's reliance on loci with uniform ceramic deposits (i.e., not mixed with material from differ-

ent periods) and the fact that he generally ignored material from debris layers, it remains that for the first time Albright brought systematic order to the key element of material culture associated with archaeological periods linked with the Old Testament in the southern Levant for all phases of the Bronze and Iron Ages. According to Larry Herr (Herr, 2002, p. 52), while earlier scholars such as Petrie ushered in typological and chronological analysis of artifacts and pottery, it was Albright who raised the standard of pottery publication and presentation in the early 1930s. Whereas earlier scholars published only complete vessels, Albright saw the utility of studying broken pottery sherds, carefully illustrating rim profiles, and using only the highest quality photographs. In addition, Albright's stratigraphy at the site was remarkably clear, making his work the most advanced of his day and unchallenged until relatively recently (Greenberg, 1987). Of key importance was Albright's timely reports on the excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim, published in the *Annual of the American School of Oriental Research* between 1926 and 1933, which present the first clear ceramic chronology for Palestine based on his careful stratigraphic analyses. These studies, presented in four volumes, became the foundation for the ceramic typology and chronology for the Holy Land still utilized today. Albright's typological study collection of Tel Beit Mirsim is still housed in the basement at the American Schools of Oriental Research facility in Jerusalem that now bears his name: the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research (formerly the American School of Oriental Research).

Some scholars have tried to belittle Albright's ceramic edifice because they claim that his identification of Tell Beit Mirsim with biblical Debir (Joshua 15:15-17, Judges 1:11-15) was wrong and that the correct identification should be Khirbet Rabud. Without this "historical" link for Tell Beit

Mirsim, it is claimed that his chronological framework is deeply flawed. However, as noted above, it was never Albright's intention to excavate a major biblical site but rather a locale where, amongst other issues, the ceramic typology of ancient Palestine during biblical times could be investigated.

Albright's methodological vision of using ceramic typology to help refine the dating of the archaeological record of the Holy Land was truly pioneering and helped lay the foundation for the first systematic archaeological field surveys by one of his most famous students, Nelson Glueck. During the 1930s, Glueck, using camels and donkeys, single-handedly surveyed most of western Transjordan (previously known as eastern Palestine) revealing for the first time an archaeological past that could be linked, with Albright's ceramic typological system, to western Palestine. As these two regions are part of the same geographic territory where so much of the Hebrew Bible narrative takes place, Albright's ceramic work at Tell Beit Mirsim was the single most important research tool enabling the historical archaeology of the Holy Land to take on even more importance than it previously held. During Albright's tenure as director of the American School of Oriental Studies in Jerusalem from 1921 to 1929 (and semiannually from 1932 to 1935), the American School in Jerusalem became the major foreign center of archaeology in the city and the hub for the analysis of pottery. Albright's style of publishing ceramics was enormous. The growing number of Jewish (later Israeli) archaeologists working in Palestine adopted his system, as did many researchers from European and British institutions. When the noted Israeli archaeologist Ruth Amiran published what is still the handbook of pottery analysis entitled *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land*, shortly before Albright's death in 1970, he wrote her a thank-you letter for the copy of the book and for dedicating it to him. Thus, the foundations that Albright laid for

ceramic analysis, the most important relative dating tool in archaeology in the Holy Land, are still very much used by scholars today.

#### EPIGRAPHY, UGARITIC STUDIES, AND ALBRIGHT

It is well known that the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics and Assyrian cuneiform during the 19th century opened up the worlds of ancient Egypt and Assyria to scholarship and the public imagination. The stimulus for the birth of both Egyptology and Assyriology was the quest to expand the investigation of the biblical world to ancient Israel's most important neighbors. By 1926 Albright had mastered more than 26 ancient and modern languages but his love of the southern Levant drew him to focus on those ancient languages that led to formation of Hebrew. Specifically, he concentrated on Proto-Canaanite, the earliest Northwest Semitic alphabetic text and scripts that date before ca. 1400 BCE, which are primarily pictographic in character. Albright studied the Proto-Canaanite inscriptions found by Petrie in the southwestern Sinai Peninsula and first published by Alan Gardiner in 1916 as well as a small number of examples found in Palestine.

#### ALBRIGHT AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947-1948, Albright was the first scholar to authoritatively assess them as "the most momentous discovery in modern times pertaining to the Bible." Like the discovery of the early East African hominid skeleton Lucy and Tutankhamen's tomb, the Dead Sea Scrolls are one of the few archaeological discoveries that have changed existing paradigms and caught the imagination of the world community. The Dead Sea Scrolls still attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to exhibitions held around the world because they include the



earliest copies of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) dating from around 200 BCE to 100 CE. At the time of the scrolls' discovery the oldest copies of the Hebrew Bible dated to ca. 100 CE. It was his prowess as an epigrapher specialized in Northwest Semitic scripts, especially all the known variants of ancient Hebrew, that "pre-adapted" Albright to immediately understand the great significance of the scrolls shortly after their discovery by some Ta'mireh Bedouin shepherds in caves around the western shore of the Dead Sea. At the time of their discovery many scholars could not believe in the antiquity of the scrolls and some argued they were fakes or dated to the medieval period. How was Albright able to assess the antiquity of the scrolls so fast?

Some 12 years before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls the *Baltimore Sun* published an article stating:

The world for three decades has possessed, without knowing it, a fragment of the Old Testament in Hebrew which was written before Christ, it has been determined by Dr. William F. Albright...This fragment, the Nash Papyrus, long has been recognized as the oldest Hebrew copy of the Aramaic script in which it is written; however, Dr. Albright has discovered it was from a much earlier period. It was written less than a century after the writing of the latest books of the Old Testament.

This fragment contains the Ten Commandments and the *Shema Israel*, used as a Jewish prayer and it was bought early in the 20th century by an Englishman, Walter L. Nash, from locals in Egypt and given to the Cambridge Museum. In 1937 Albright published his study of the document ("A Biblical Fragment from the Maccabaeian Age: the Nash Papyrus") in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Years later this study proved to be foundational for assessing the age of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In 1948 the scrolls were brought to the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem for evaluation, where they were photographed by John Trever. Trever airmailed two

small Leica photographs of a column or two of the scrolls that had been brought to the school on February 18, 1948, by Metropolitan Athanasius Yeshue Samuel and Father Butros Sowmy of St. Mark's Monastery for the evaluation. David Noel Freedman recalls Albright saying that within an hour of first looking at the photographs he knew it was a genuinely ancient discovery and that the scrolls dated from the last two centuries BCE and the first century CE. As Mrs. Albright related the story, it may have taken Albright 20 minutes to form a judgment, and 19 of those minutes were spent trying to find his 1937 article on the Nash Papyrus, with photograph, somewhere on his stacked desk. This was an example of Albright's remarkable memory for form and detail. He recognized in the tiny Leica photographs four letters with distinguishing characteristics that were definitely older than those he had written about and dated in the Nash Papyrus over 10 years earlier. As editor of the *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, Albright published an article in the April 1948 volume announcing the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the October 1949 volume Albright himself published one of the first scholarly articles on the scrolls' discovery, entitled "On the Date of the Scrolls from Ain Feshkha and the Nash Papyrus," that included a good infrared photograph of the Nash Papyrus for comparison. When news of Willard Libby's new method of dating ancient remains using carbon 14 ( $^{14}\text{C}$ ) reached Albright, he announced in an Associated Press article that he was eager to try out the new technique in Egypt and the Bible lands; Albright was always eager to apply new discoveries and new methods to archaeological and biblical research.

Albright's early assessment of the antiquity of the Dead Sea Scrolls played a critical role in determining the authenticity of this remarkable discovery, their importance for

future scholarly research as well as their rapid purchase for museums in Israel and Jordan and their ultimate conservation for future generations.

#### IN CONCLUSION

While Albright made very few scholarly mistakes in his life, he himself described one or another admitted errors as beauties. He was sure that Ekron, the ancient mound site in southern Israel, was not where the more recent excavations have proved it to be. In addition, Albright was convinced that the patriarchs and matriarchs could be located in the Middle Bronze Age and his famous interpretation of Genesis 14 has proved to be unworkable.

Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman mentioned in a footnote to their book on *Early Hebrew Orthography* relating to the famous ninth-century BCE Mesha or Moabite stone (found in Transjordan) that the chronology of both Mesha and the Bible works better if one doesn't emend the text and drastically reduce the number of years it represents, as Albright in fact did. It is interesting that when Albright reviewed the manuscript, he left the footnote as it was.

Albright was the leading figure in the fields of Levantine archaeology and biblical studies for most of the 20th century and produced more major scholars than anyone else. A total of 57 Ph.D. dissertations were produced under his guidance. Albright's students, such as G. Ernest Wright, trained the senior cadre of biblical or Levantine archaeologists leading the field today, including W. G. Dever, Lawrence Stager, and others in the United States. During Albright's lifetime, British and European researchers were also deeply influenced by his view of the relationship between the Old Testament and archaeology. Consequently, Albright has left a lasting imprint on the nature of historical archaeology in the southern Levant and biblical studies in general. In spite of attempts to

deconstruct Albright by leaders in the field of archaeology today (Dever, 1993) as a positivist, heavily influenced by his own religious conservatism and methodological flaws, these charges fail to appreciate the revolutionary impact Albright's establishment of a new scholarly paradigm—biblical archaeology—continues to have on Levantine archaeology.

Albright deeply influenced the development of archaeology in the newly founded state of Israel, where his biblical archaeology paradigm continues to play a role in shaping research directions and the study of historical archaeology at the major institutions, such as the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, Bar Ilan University, Ben Gurion University, and other organizations where the aim is to situate biblical history in the greater context of the ancient Near East by taking an interdisciplinary approach as first advocated by Albright. Similarly, in the United States and a number of European countries (Germany, Switzerland, Norway, the United Kingdom, and others) wherever the archaeology of the southern Levant is taught, in spite of different approaches (traditional historical, biblical minimalist), the general questions regarding archaeology's relationship with ancient text as formulated by W. F Albright during the 20th century still lay at the core of the field.

#### CHRONOLOGY

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1891      | Birth, May 24, Coquimbo, Chile (U.S. citizen)                |
| 1912      | B.A., Upper Iowa University                                  |
| 1916      | Ph.D., Oriental Seminary, Johns Hopkins University           |
| 1918      | Military service in the U.S. Army                            |
| 1919      | Thayer fellow, American School of Oriental Research          |
| 1920-1929 | Director, American School of Oriental Research,<br>Jerusalem |
| 1921      | Marries Ruth Norton, August 3                                |
| 1922      | Director, excavations at Tell el-Ful, Palestine Mandate      |
| 1926-1932 | Director, excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim, four seasons,     |

## Palestine Mandate

- 1929-1958 W. W. Spence Professor of Oriental Languages, Johns Hopkins University
- 1930-1968 Editor, *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*
- 1932-1935 Director, semiannual basis, American School of Oriental Research, Jerusalem
- 1937 Publishes study of Nash Papyrus establishing basis for authenticating Dead Sea Scrolls
- 1946 Visiting professor, University of Chicago
- 1947-1948 Authenticates the Dead Sea Scrolls
- 1947-1948 University of California African Expedition to Sinai Peninsula with Wendell Phillips
- 1949-1950 Expedition to Saudi Arabia with Wendell Phillips
- 1955 Elected to the National Academy of Sciences
- 1956 Establishes the *Anchor Bible* commentary series with D. N. Freedman
- 1958 Retires from Johns Hopkins University
- 1969 Declared *Ya'qir Yerushalyim* ("notable of Jerusalem") by the President of Israel
- 1971 Death, September 19, Baltimore, Maryland

## SELECTED AWARDS AND HONORS

- 1936 Honorary Th.D., Utrecht University
- 1946 Honorary Th.D., University of Oslo
- 1949 Honorary L.H.D., St. Andrews University
- 1951 Honorary Litt.D., Yale University
- 1952 Honorary Litt.D., Harvard University  
Honorary L.H.D., Wayne State University  
Honorary L.H.D., Manhattan College
- 1956 Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences
- 1957 Honorary Th.D., University of Uppsala  
Honorary D. Phil., Harvard University
- 1964 Honorary LL.D., Johns Hopkins University
- 1967 Gold Medal for Distinguished Archaeological Achievement, Archaeological Institute of America
- Award for Distinguished Scholarship in the Humanities, American Council of Learned Societies

## SELECTED MEMBERSHIPS

- American Oriental Society (president, 1935)  
 American Philosophical Society (vice president 1956-1959)  
 American School of Oriental Research  
 International Organization of Old Testament Scholars (president,  
 1956-1957)  
 Palestine Exploration Society (president, 1921-1922, 1934-1935)  
 Society of Biblical Literature (president, 1939)

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