

The secret water shaft and tunnel of the Jebusites' Jerusalem, believed by some scholars to be the "gutter" through which David's army penetrated into Jerusalem

clarification. The capture is described twice, first in II Samuel 5 and again in I Chronicles 11. The two accounts are not identical, but one complements the other. Here is the kernel of the story, taken from Samuel, with the relevant additional details from Chronicles included in brackets:

"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land; which spake unto David, saying, 'Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither,' thinking, 'David cannot come in hither.' Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David. And David said on that day, 'Whosoever getteth up to the "gutter," and smiteth the Jebusites [first], and the lame and the blind, . . . he shall be chief and captain.' [So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief.]"

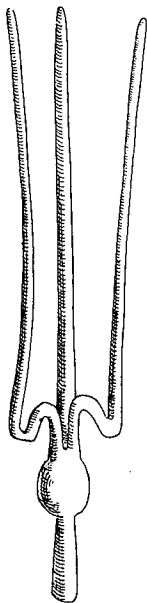
The word "gutter" posed a problem. To what could it refer? The fortress of Zion was sited on a hill just south of today's Old City of Jerusalem, and archaeological excavations on this site revealed a vertical tunnel by which the inhabitants of the Jebusite city could reach an outside well in time of siege. This led some scholars to relate the "gutter" to this tunnel, suggesting that David was calling on his men to storm the city through this tunnel. But this is hardly feasible, for the tunnel was narrow and vertical.

An alternative theory—suggested by the late Professor E. L. Sukenik—is to translate the Biblical Hebrew word *Zinnor* not as "gutter" but as a weapon rather like a three-pronged pitchfork or a trident. The Hebrew letter for "and" is *w*, and *w* is also the Hebrew suffix for "his." By moving the letter *w* back one space in the text and reading it as the suffix of "Zinnor" rather than a prefix for the succeeding word, we would get the following phrase which would make the action clear: "Whosoever . . . smiteth . . . the lame and the blind *with his trident* . . ."

But most baffling of all is the reference to "the lame and the blind." What are such people doing on the walls of a fortified city? And why does David offer a high premium—the prize of "chief and captain"—to the first man who smites them? The generally accepted explanation follows that of Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 7, Chapter 3:

"Now the Jebusites, who were the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and were by extraction Canaanites, shut their gates, and placed the blind, and the lame, and all their maimed persons, upon the wall, in way of derision of the king; and said, that the very lame themselves would hinder his entrance into it. This they did *out of contempt* of his power, and as depending on the strength of their walls."

But it is far from reasonable to suggest that the Jebusites were so sure of themselves, their power, and the strength of their fortifications that they could feel themselves free to be derisive about David. It seems to me quite the reverse. David was going from strength to strength. His rival, Saul, was dead. He had been



A trident from Lachish of approximately David's times, believed by some scholars to be the "Zinnor" (the "gutter")

crowned king by the Tribes of Israel and Judah in the entire area round Jerusalem. On what basis would the Jebusites have felt themselves secure in their own strength against David, whose prestige as a powerful military commander must have been a byword in the land? It seems that the very opposite was the case. The Jebusites were in a hopeless position. Most of the cities near Jerusalem had either been captured by David or had gone over to his side. The Jebusites must have considered that they did not stand a chance against him. As a last desperate effort, they decided on an action which involved the blind and the lame and which was calculated to strike terror into the hearts of David and his army and prevent them from even attempting to attack the city. It apparently succeeded, for David was forced to announce a formidable prize for the most valiant of his heroes who would dare to be the *first* to attack the Jebusites. What was this Jebusite action, and what was its connexion with the lame and the blind?

It seems to me that much enlightenment on this problem can be gained from a document found at Boghazköy, the site of the capital of the Hittites. This document deals with the ceremony of oath-taking by the army, a solemn ritual ceremony where the men of the Hittite forces were made to swear allegiance to king, queen, and country. The presiding officiator was a priest. The rites were symbolic. Their purpose was to instill a mighty fear into the hearts of the troops should they dare to break the oath of allegiance and betray the king. At one, for example, the priest would heat wax in front of the assembled troops, and as it melted, he would thunder: "Whoever breaks these oaths . . . let him melt like wax. . . ." At another, he would pour water on fire, declaiming: "Just as this burning fire is snuffed out, whoever breaks these oaths . . . let this man's vitality, vigor, and future happiness be snuffed out. . . ."

And now comes a part in the text which I believe is of direct relevance to our Jebusites in Jerusalem. One of the rites at the Hittite oath-taking ceremony is described thus in the Boghazköy document:

"They parade in front of them a blind woman and a deaf man and you speak as follows: 'See! here is a blind woman and a deaf man. Whoever does evil to the king and the queen, let the oaths seize him! Let them make him blind! Let them make him deaf! Let them blind him like a blind man! Let them deafen him like a deaf man! Let them annihilate him, the man himself together with his wife, his children, and his kin!'"

In the context of this ceremony, it seems to me that we can now understand what the Jebusites were trying to do as David and his men massed to attack their city. Recognizing the hopelessness of their plight, incapable of withstanding an assault, they tried to deter David from making the attempt. This they did by stationing a number of lame and blind people on the wall or near the gate and staging something similar to the Hittite ceremony, using the same ritual symbolism to strike fear into the hearts of David's men, crying:

"Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither."

This phrase is incomplete, and it was probably only the beginning of an oath which ended with the threatening curse of blindness and maiming to any who would dare lay hands on the blind and the halt or on the Jebusites in general. The book of Samuel, which records the utterances of the Jebusites with the utmost brevity, nevertheless adds immediately to this quoted sentence: "thinking, 'David cannot come in hither.'" In other words, the Jebusites felt that David would not dare attempt an assault against the power of the oath and the magic. And apparently their threatening curse—and *not* their derision—had its effect on David's men, so that he was compelled to offer a substantial reward to the man who would perform an act of heroism. And what was this heroic act? Not breaching the wall and capturing the city, but doing just one thing: being the *first* to rise and go forward, the first to strike the Jebusites, the blind and the halt, and demonstrate thereby to the whole army that they need not fear to defy the power of the oaths and witchcraft of the Jebusites: "So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief."

The Battles of David

The 40-year reign of David and the 40-year reign of Solomon, occupying most of the 10th century B.C., may be termed the period of the Israel Empire. In this period of the United Monarchy, Israel authority or influence extended as far north as the River Euphrates and as far south as the Egyptian frontier, within the boundaries of the land of Israel as promised to Abraham and his seed in God's covenant. This expansion took place mostly in David's time, which was replete with battles (I Chronicles 22: 7-8):

"And David said to Solomon, 'My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight."'"

The Biblical accounts of David's campaigns, with few exceptions, are not sufficiently detailed to enable us to discern the tactics he employed. But they offer us enough to trace his broad strategic plans. After he established his authority within Israel, his campaigns may be divided into two main geographic phases. In the first, David operates within two concentric circles, with Jerusalem as the single strategic center. Within this phase may be included most of David's battles with the Philistines, the Edomites, the Ammonites, and the Moabites, that is, the immediate neighbors of Judah and Israel. The outer circle encompasses some of his campaigns against the Aramaeans in the north.

The strategic virtue of operating from a single center outwards, like radii, was that David enjoyed the advantages of fighting on "interior lines of communication." This enabled him to maintain a regular army—comparatively small—in the center, which could be rushed quickly, with interior lines of supply, to the east, the west, the north, or the south. Its great weakness was that David was compelled to rely too much on what may be called the "direct approach." The routes of his

