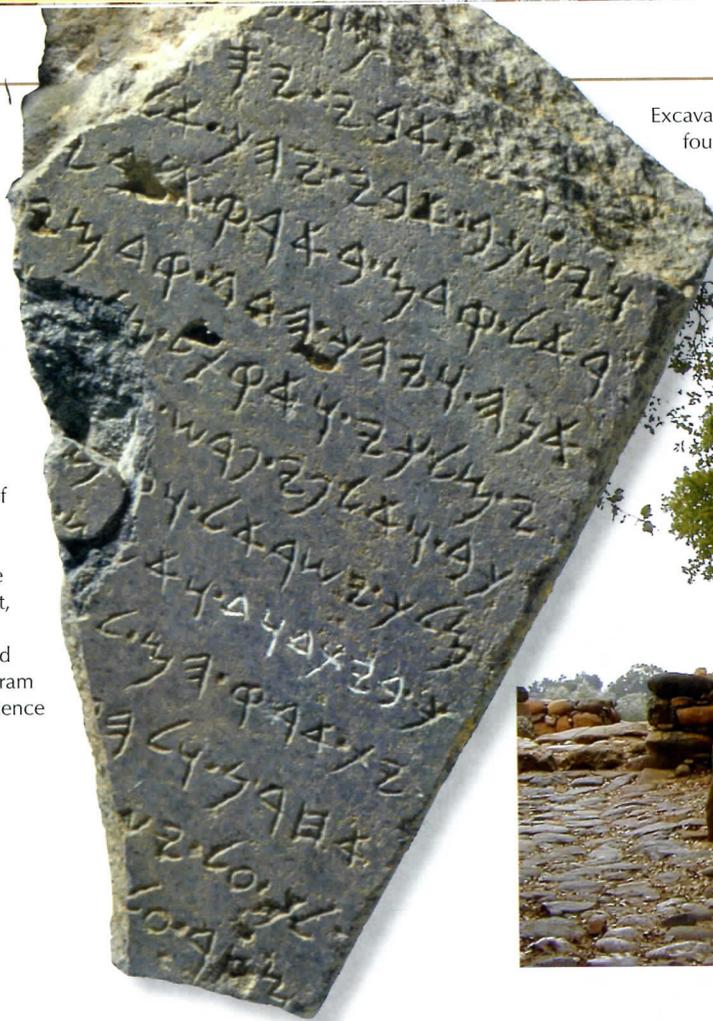


▲ THE ARAMAIC INSCRIPTION

on black basalt was found at the northern Israelite site of Tel Dan. The phrase “house of David” is highlighted in the photo. The reconstructed inscription reads: “I killed Jehoram son of Ahab king of Israel and I killed Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of the house of David.” The Aramaeans to Israel’s northeast were subdued by David but, as the nation of Israel divided and weakened after David’s death, Aram regained its independence and power.



Excavations at Dan have uncovered the ninth century BC foundations of the gate of the city where the king sat in judgment over the people. This photo shows a partial reconstruction of the gate area. ▼



MYTHIC KING OR MAN OF GOD?



Critics of the Bible have contended for a long time that David was not a real person. He was (they claim) just a mythic character created to show Israel what a “good” king was like. The critics based their doubts about David on the fact that no record of David has been found outside the Bible. But in 1993 that all changed.

A stone slab was discovered in the most northern region of Old Testament Israel. The inscription on the slab exalted the deeds of a king of Aram, the nation to the north and east of ancient Israel. The man who discovered the inscription, Avraham Biran, believes that the Aramean king was Hazael, a ruler mentioned several times in the Bible. What makes the inscription so astonishing is its reference to “the house of David.” If there was a “house of David,” that is, a ruling family descended from David, then there must have been a real man with that name. The critics had to go back to the drawing board—again.

