

in these other two regions. They were lands of tremendous fertility, with great rivers bringing to them the means of almost constant prosperity. Palestine had no such advantage. The River Jordan is in a deep valley far removed from most of the historic areas of Palestine. It is an obstacle to be crossed, and not to any great extent a source of water and of fertility. Comparatively few of the important events of Biblical history took place in the Jordan Valley and this area was a prosperous region only during the very earliest period and never again in Biblical times. In most of Palestine prosperity was dependent on rainfall. It never reached the heights attained in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, where the monarchs were able to erect colossal temples and palaces, and to force thousands of people to build them great memorials, with inscriptions carved in the solid rock. From a political viewpoint Palestine was never in a class with the other regions.

There is an even more important reason why we have less material from Palestine that is vital for archeology than from Egypt or Mesopotamia. This reason lies partly in the nature of the climate and partly in the location. The climate is not nearly as dry as in Egypt, and materials crumble much faster. Even when buried, papyrus is not apt to last many centuries, except in the very dry sections of the wilderness beside the Dead Sea. A few clay tablets have been found in Palestine, but their number is not great. It was far simpler to write on papyrus if the material was available, as it was here because of the nearness of Egypt.

Probably there was a very great amount of writing done in Palestine at all periods, but being on papyrus most of it disintegrated very rapidly. Occasionally lack of papyrus made it necessary to write on clay tablets or to scratch records on pieces of broken pottery and this accounts for most of the little writing from Old Testament times that has been found in Palestine. This scarcity of written materials is a great hindrance. Other methods than study of written