

THE EARLY DAYS

Excavations in Samaria

The second expedition to Samaria (The Joint Expedition, 1931–1935), with the participation of the Hebrew University, was one of the largest archaeological undertakings in the 1930s. The other institutions that participated in these excavations were Harvard University, The Palestine Exploration Fund, the British Academy, and the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem.

The ancient city of Samaria, located northwest of Nablus, became the capital of the Kingdom of Israel under King Omri in the early ninth century BCE. The site was identified with the village Sebastia, which preserved the name of the city Sebaste, as it was called by King Herod who rebuilt it.

In the Upper City (the acropolis) of Samaria, evidence was found of royal construction from the Kingdom of Israel, which included a double fortification system, a palace, and storehouses. The Lower City yielded burial caves and a ritual site (?) from the same period. Remains of monumental construction from the late periods in Samaria include the Akra from the Hellenistic period, the city wall, the Augusteum, the forum, the *cardo* (colonnaded street), a Temple of Kore, and a Roman theater.



View from the excavations of the Joint Expedition to Samaria-Sebaste, 1931–1935

The collection contains a selection of artifacts, including ivory furniture inlays carved in bas-relief. Such pieces were found in many places on the acropolis, and an especially large quantity was found in one area of “The Ivory House.”



Parts of a stylized Tree of Life, Iron Age II.