

The Doctrine of the Hittite

The term Hittite has a twofold use in the OLD TESTAMENT. Usually it designates a relatively unimportant ethnic group living in Palestine since the days of the patriarchs. (Gen 15:19-21).

These people, called the "sons of Heth," were descended from Noah's son Ham through Canaan (Gen 10:15; 1Ch 1:13) and were settled in the central hills of Palestine. (Num 13:29; Jos 11:3)

In a few cases, however, the term Hittite is used in the OLD TESTAMENT to designate outsiders, non-Semitic peoples living in the north, **who were to be respected and feared** as a great power. (1Ki 11:1; 2Ki 7:6-7; 2Ch 1:17).

These were the Hittites so famous from extrabiblical historical sources.

Although it has been suggested that the small enclaves of Hittites in central Palestine were part of the northern Hittites who migrated south early in the 2nd millennium B.C., there need be no connection between the two groups at all, except for a coincidental similarity of name.

The Indo-European Hittites who entered Anatolia (Turkey) and the Near East around 2000 from the steppes of inner Asia received their name more or less by accident, by virtue of the fact that they settled in territory previously held by an earlier non-Indo-European group called Hatti-people (or Hattians). Henceforth in this doctrine the three groups will be called "sons of Heth," "Hittites," and "Hattians" respectively, to avoid confusion.

The red and black highly burnished Khirbet Kerah products found in Palestine are virtually identical with pottery in central Anatolia and the Kurgan homeland in Transcaucasia in the 3rd millennium B.C. This may suggest an incursion or migration of Hattians into Palestine in the 23rd century B.C.

There is no way of knowing how long the Hattians had been living in central Anatolia before the Hittites arrived c. 2000 B.C. Although the Hittites acquired territory and political supremacy in central Anatolia around the Halys River partly by force of arms, there was no organized conquest of the land in the manner of Israel's conquest of Palestine. The Hattians it would seem formed a minority group within Hittite society, but were very influential in religious matters.

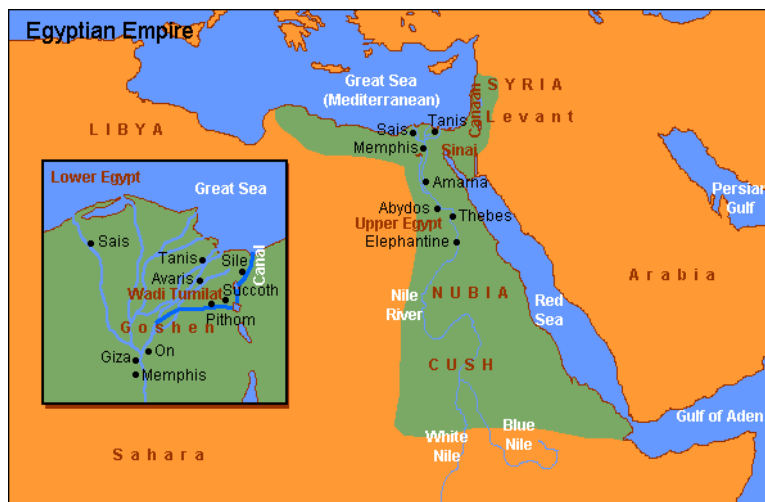
Although it is possible that an earlier king, Anitta of Kussar, who subdued five rival cities and moved his capital to Nesa (Kanes), was related in some way to the later Hittite kings, the Hittite kingdom proper is usually dated 1680-1460 B.C. Hattusili I (1650-1620 B.C.) raided and defeated Alalakh, Urshu, and Aleppo in Syria. Mursili I (1620-1590 B.C.) led the Hittite army down the Euphrates to conquer Aleppo.

The Hittite army was more than successful for they extended their original mission and destroyed Babylon, and thus put an end to the Babylonian dynasty founded by Hammurabi.



After Mursili the power of the Hittites declined. It is possible that the first serious editing of the Hittite laws dates from the reign of Telipinu. (1525-1500 B.C.) Revival of Hittite power began with Tudhaliya II (1460-1440 B.C.), who in cooperation with Thutmose III of Egypt destroyed Aleppo (c. 1457). During the years that followed, however, the Hurrian kingdom of Mittanni established itself in northern Syria, restricting the Hittites to their mountainous homeland in central Anatolia. The greatest and most famous of the Hittite kings was Suppiluliuma (1380-1340 B.C.), who reduced the kingdom of Mittanni to a vassal state and controlled Syria south to the Lebanon region. Suppiluliuma laid a solid foundation for the administration of Syrian vassal states, binding each of them to himself in suzerainty treaties, the literary form of which closely resembles that of the covenant which God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai.

During the reign of Muwatalli (1306-1282 B.C.), Rameses II of Egypt joined battle with the Hittite allied armies at Kadesh on the Orontes.



Both sides claimed victory in their annals, but Muwatalli retained Syria and added Abina (Hobah) to his possessions. Rameses later allied himself by treaty with Hattusili III (1275-1250 B.C.), against the mutual threat of the young Assyrian state. The Hittite Empire centered in Asia Minor came to an end when barbarian hordes from Thrace swept over the western lands and c. 1200 B.C., destroyed the capital city of Hattusas (at Boghazkoy, 75 miles east of Ankara, Turkey). Sea Peoples from the west and south may have also had a part in the collapse of the Hittites. The Sea Peoples were the original Greeks who later became quite famous in the history of the Middle East. See Pastor Merrit's *Doctrine of the Greek Sea Peoples*.

The political designation "Hatti" was carried on by a small group of northern Syrian city-states, among whom were Carchemish, Aleppo, and Hamath. Hittites from these cities may have served in David's armies (1Sa 26:6; 2Sa 11:3), although these may have been the sons of Heth, since Ahimelech is transparently a Semitic name and Uriah may be either Semitic or Hurrian. Semitic names in themselves, however, need not rule out Syro-Hittite origin, since the Hittites of Syria had long since accommodated themselves to the prevailing Aramean culture.

When Ezekiel accused the profligate Jerusalem of being the offspring of an Amorite father and a Hittite mother (Eze 16:3), he had in mind the sons of Heth, not the great empire in Asia Minor. Ephron the Hittite of Gen 23 may also have been the sons of Heth, although some have detected traces of Hittite real estate procedure in the transaction between Ephron and Abraham.

The language of the Hittites was an Indo-European tongue related to early Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit. Other groups in Anatolia related to the Hittites spoke related dialects called Luwian and Palaic. The language of the Hattians was neither Semitic nor Indo-European. The laws of the Hittites, inscribed on clay tablets in cuneiform script, are very similar in form and content to contemporary law codes from Mesopotamia. But unlike Semitic law with its characteristic stress on *lex talionis* (laws of retaliation), these laws stress compensation for injuries, undoubtedly a residue of the old Indo-European *wergeld* institution, (i.e., establishing a price on a person's life on the basis of rank).

The Hittites possessed two distinct military advantages over their foes. They were the first to smelt iron on a large scale in the Near East, which gave them superior weapons. Hittites were also in the vanguard of those who developed the breeding and training of chariot horses into a science. Among clay tablets in the Hittite archives were found an extensive series of tablets describing procedures in training chariot horses. The author of these texts was a Hurrian named Kikkuli. Solomon in later times imported fine horses from Cilicia (Kue) for his chariotry. (1Ki 10:28-29)

The word Hittite or Hittites appears 47 times in Scripture. It can only be found in the OLD TESTAMENT as one might imagine.

The first mention is Gen 15:20 where God gave their land to Israel. Genesis recall was written by Moses in approximately 1450 B.C., The last mention of the Hittites in the Bible is Eze 14:3 and 45 as part of a curse on Jerusalem. Ezekiel wrote in c. 597 while in Babylonian exile. The Israelites were loath to conquer the Hittites. Perhaps because in 1500 the Hittites were not the strongest of their adversaries.

Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

Gen 15:19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

Gen 15:20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

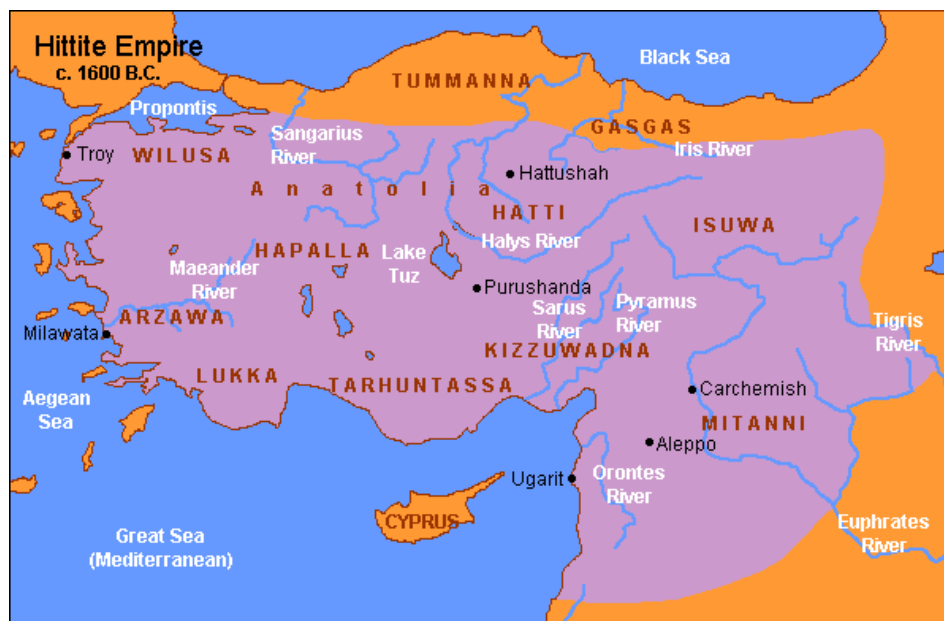
Gen 15:21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

The ancient empire of the Hittites consisted of a vast territory which extended south into the promised land of Israel.



Although Israel disobeyed the Lord and did not annihilate the Hittites they will at the Lord's Second Advent possess their land. From all indication the Hittites struck a treaty with Joshua after God's supernatural intervention. Just how much territory Israel settled is problematic.

Jos 1:4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

Jos 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Jos 1:6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

Jos 24:11 And you went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.

Jos 24:12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

Jos 24:13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

Conclusion

What an irony: "Scholars once concluded there was not a "Hittite" civilization at the time of Abraham and then a shovel or two later "there she wuz." In speaking of this and other subjects Nelson Glueck former president of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and one of the three greatest archaeologists in the world said "All I ever said was that in all my archaeological investigations I have never found one artifact that contradicts any statement of the Word of God."